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## Will the real Jan Hus please stand up: bias as an element in early reformation historiography

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Will the real Jan Hus please stand up: Bias as an element in  
early reformation historiography

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
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Iowa State University

This is to certify that the Master's thesis of  
  
Robert Foran Fuqua  
  
has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

Signatures have been redacted for privacy

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## INTRODUCTION

Jan Hus was a giant of a man, who stood astride the Moldau, watchful, as the guardian of Prague against the evil satanic conspiracy of the Romish church, during Bohemia's darkest hours.<sup>1</sup> Or, if you prefer, John Huss<sup>2</sup> was an evil homunculus of a man, set loose upon the planet to pave the way for the thousand-year reign of Lucifer and his dark angels. Although the two previous descriptions may seem somewhat farfetched, they represent, if broadly, a problem which faces the researcher into the history of the early reformation. This problem is one of bias, and pervades this particular subject matter in ways and to levels which are not often reached.

The subject matter, which has at its heart not only issues of religion, but of nationalism, ethnic identity, and even political idealism has, over the course of the nearly six centuries since the death of Jan Hus, run the gamut of variations of misrepresentation and weak exploration. The nature of the subject, driven as it is by a split within the Catholic church, rooted in the early years of the Protestant reformation, and with participants of virtually every ethnic and national variegation which fifteenth-century Europe had to offer, is inherently divisive in its presentation. It invites parochialism and defensive posturing from even the most seasoned historians.

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<sup>1</sup> This opening might seem just a bit "over the top" until one reads the opening lines of Matthew Spinka's *John Hus and the Czech Reform*. (Hamden: Connecticut, 1966)

<sup>2</sup> A forewarning to the reader: hereafter throughout this work, the spelling of Hus' name will be regularized as 'Jan Hus.' Likewise the names of Sbynco, the archbishop of Prague, and Wenzel, the King of Bohemia. The exception to that regularization will be in the quoted sections, where the spellings chosen by the original writers will be honored, in their many variegations.

It is also, due to the nature of the individuals involved, a subject far too prone to the pitfalls of hero worship. The men involved in the story of the life of Jan Hus seem to the modern researcher to loom larger than life. Their deeds, both good and evil, are magnified by the passage of time. Our interpretation of them is also affected by the manner in which they have been addressed. Literally from the time these events took place, the tellers of the tale have had one reason or another to embellish or diminish the facts of the matter, to heighten what they perceived to be good deeds, and to lessen what were perceived to be sins. The primary sources were wrapped in the events themselves, and the secondary sources have been based on that same set of jaundiced primary sources.

There is also the factor of language to consider. A historian studying situations in regional American history where a community-splitting or organization-splitting events occur can attest to the difficulty of obtaining an accurate representation of events. The additional baggage of attempting to sort out the facts from the embellishments is incomprehensibly heightened when the issue of multiple languages in the retelling of the tale is added. This problem is further magnified by the relatively small number of readers of the Czech language among writers of Western European history.

This work will attempt to examine some of these problems and look for ways in which the researcher can make himself more aware of bias as an element in the study of history. The object of this research is not to identify every fragment of literature available on the subject of Jan Hus and the Bohemian reform movement and point out all of their

individual biases, but instead to examine a relatively small number of them, representing a few broad groups, in order to give example of some of the *types* of pitfalls awaiting the unsuspecting researcher.

The work has its roots in a study of deviation within the medieval Eucharist. It appears as an outcropping of an examination of what the followers of Hus would become, the Utraquists and the Taborites. It represents a significant deviation of its own from the direction of the original inquiry but one which has proven to be very satisfying.

## METHODOLOGY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

As might be expected given the nature of this work, the typical methodological approach was quickly rejected as inappropriate. Where a researcher would normally eschew secondary source material in favor of primary sources, the examination of the historiography of an event or period is by its nature often an examination of secondary source material. In this case both primary and secondary source materials were examined, as well as a review of broad survey reference material.

The biographical examination of Hus proved to be in itself a singular hurdle. Presenting itself initially was the issue of the depth into which an examination of the subject matter being discussed by the various primary and secondary sources need go. Too much inquisition into the original subject matter would beg the question of which was being researched, the life of Hus, or writings about the life of Hus. Too little research, however, into Hus' background would provide no benchmark against which the materials in question might be judged. Thus a happy medium has been sought, in which the general facts of Hus' life are presented and in as straightforward a manner as possible.

Certain conclusions are reached when undertaking any such examination of unusual events. Indeed, the fascination with moments in history when things have gone in directions which a researcher finds grotesquely fascinating is one of the elements which attracts many to the study of history in the first place. Moreover, the personalities involved in this particular chain of events are compelling. Many of them exhibit behavior



which would not ordinarily be considered particularly positive. A scarce few exhibit behavior which one might easily find heroic or noble. A danger, and one which this researcher has striven assiduously to avoid, is that of inserting one's self and opinions into the researched material.<sup>3</sup> This should not indicate that a researcher should not hold opinions, nor that they may not shape his or her direction of inquiry: simply that he or she may not manipulate the available data to fit his or her pet theories.

After determining to study primarily secondary material, another problem asserted itself. How was the secondary material in question to be judged when it depended on primary materials which were in and of themselves of questionable objectivity? Clearly, the issue of primary source material and questions of bias within that material needed to be addressed, but within the larger context of looking at secondary evidence. The issue has been addressed, in the chapter of this work entitled "The Problem of Primary Sources," and serves as a platform for examining the secondary sources which would draw upon those primary sources.

Aside from an examination of bias within secondary source material, the third area which quickly became fodder for examination was that of survey-based literature, and the issues of inclusionary/exclusionary bias within those sources. Again, the material in question presents unique difficulties, which are dealt with in the chapter entitled "The Difficulties Inherent in Survey Literature".

The material examined is as might be expected, quite varied in its nature. As primary sources, particularly in examining the life of Hus, and the councils which so

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<sup>3</sup> Asides, humorous and otherwise, in footnotes notwithstanding.

shaped it, a number of works were invaluable. Foremost among these were Hus own writings, collected in the three volume work *Opera Omnia*. Additionally, the collections of the councils of the church, in the form of Norman Tanner's *Degrees of the Ecumenical Councils* and E. H. Landon's *Manual of the Councils of the Catholic Church* were invaluable, as was the *Series Latina* of J. P. Migne.

A number of secondary sources were also called upon, with somewhat more stringent critical examination, in assembling the biographical section. Gillett's hefty *The Life and Times of John Huss* was, though not without its flaws, particularly a penchant for enthusiasm,<sup>4</sup> of significant usefulness. Another useful text in addressing the years of Hus' life, particularly where the councils of Pisa and Constance were concerned was E. F. Jacob's *Essays in the Conciliar Epoch*, a truly useful work in helping to grasp the magnitude of the complexity of the conciliar era.

Setting aside the biographical area of the work, the works which proved the most useful were frankly those which showed the greatest or most unique biases. Here again, despite its usefulness, Gillett is notably present. Gillett's work is, however overshadowed by a number of others, including Eustace J. Kitts *Pope John the twenty-third and Master John Hus of Bohemia*. Of absolutely indispensable nature were the writings of Count von Lützow, specifically his *Life and Times of Master John Hus*, and *The Hussite Wars*. Both Johann Loserth's *Wyclif and Hus* and the writings of Matthew Spinka, particularly *John Hus' Concept of the Church* proved entertaining, though it is certain, as shall be seen,

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<sup>4</sup> Which will, of course be examined further in the chapter entitled "Regional and Religious Biases in Secondary Sources".

that neither would find pleasure in being mentioned in the other's company.

Finally there are the survey works to consider, which like the secondary works mentioned above are made remarkable by their weaknesses. Unfortunately, the sheer number of those texts overall, and moreover the number of *those* exhibiting serious deficits where the early reformation is concerned both negates the ability to single out any one of them and prohibits the listing of all of them in any location other than the bibliography. A number of individual issues with regard to these texts will however be addressed in the chapter titled "The Difficulties Inherent in Survey Literature."

## SETTING THE STAGE: THE JOURNEY TO PRAGUE

Any exploration of the subject of bias in the early Reformation historiography involving Jan Hus must, by its nature, also involve at least a cursory examination of just who Jan Hus was. While the very problem which is the subject at hand creates certain difficulties in doing this, a cautious eye will allow the researcher willing to wade through a considerable amount of secondary material to find enough common reference to give an overview of Master Hus and the turbulence which surrounded him in Prague.

Jan Hus was born on July 6, 1373<sup>5</sup>, in the Bohemian town of Hussintz, from which he took his name. Varillas<sup>6</sup> suggests that he took the name of his hometown due to his being of illegitimate birth, but given the statements of other sources concerning his youth and the death of his father, there is no real reason to lend this attempt at character assassination any real credence. Hus' parents, although poor, were dedicated to his education.<sup>7</sup> His father is reported to have died when Hus was young, and his mother was too impoverished even to adequately clothe her young son. His welfare was aided by the local noble, Nicholas of Hussintz<sup>8</sup> who not only provided the boy with clothes in this early instance but would later aid him further. Hus studied at a local monastery, and by all available reports was a good, if challenging student. He hit, however, a wall of

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew Spinka, *John Hus' Concept of the Church* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 7. Unfortunately for the researcher, even something so trivial as the date of his birth is called into question. Some sources suggest that his birth was in 1369. There may even be something of a tendency here to lessen the perceived severity of his death by artificially aging him a bit. The date of 1373 now seems the most likely, based largely on recent research done by the Czech scholar F. M. Bartos.

<sup>6</sup> E. H. Gillett, *The Life and Times of John Huss*, 2 vol. (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1863) i, 43. Gillett here references Varillas only to reject his supposition, calling him "an obscure writer."

<sup>7</sup> Spinka, *Concept*, 8.

<sup>8</sup> Just a grumbling aside. It is interesting to note that while Varillas suggests that Hus took his name due to questionable paternity, no one seems to have suggested the same where Nicholas of Hussintz is concerned.

information availability on this local level. It seemed that the young master Hus was a source of questions which the local educators were either unable or unwilling to provide answers to. It was suggested to Hus' mother, and thus to Hus, that he go to Prachtitz, where a larger school, and thus presumably more information, was available.

After completing his studies in Prachtitz, which took some time, Hus returned for a very short time to Hussintz. He had been influenced by the monks who taught him at Prachtitz to seek enrollment at the university in Prague. After making preparations for the journey, he set off for Prague, perhaps accompanied by his mother, a cake, and a goose.<sup>9</sup>

Regardless of the events of the Journey, Hus did ultimately end up in Prague. There, according to legend,<sup>10</sup> Hus took employment as a household servant in the estate of one of the professors, in exchange for which he received not only food and clothing, but gained access to a well developed and honed library. Hus entered the University of Prague about 1389 and may have gained admission as a member of the "College of the Poor." It is also possible that here again, Hus was the recipient of aid from Nicholas of Hussintz; both possibilities are suggested by various sources, but neither is established as absolutely accurate.

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<sup>9</sup> Count von Lützow, *The Life and Times of Master John Hus*, (London: J. M. Dent & Co. 1909), 65; also Gillett, *Life*, 46. Here Gillett suggests that Hus' mother accompanied him on his journey to Prague, bearing as gifts for the rector of the university a cake and a goose, the latter of which gets loose and runs away, which the mother sees as an unfavorable omen. On the one hand, particularly given the nature of Hus' name (Bohemian for goose) this has elements of the apocryphal to it. On the other an impoverished mother following her rising star of an educated son to the big city is not an unknown concept nor is a superstitious nature on the part of any rural populace.

<sup>10</sup> Gillett, i, 46. One severely annoying aspect of the source material for this work is that there are *far* too many "it is said"s.

However he entered the University, Hus showed himself to be a dedicated student with a real fire for the pursuit of knowledge. He received a Bachelors degree in 1393, and was granted the degree Master of Arts in 1396.

It was during these important years that Hus would form the friendships which would play such pivotal roles, though not always happy ones, during his later troubles. In 1393, Hus became friends with one James of Misa, who would later be better known as Jacobel, a reference to his size. In 1398, he met Jerome of Prague, who would share his fate at Constance.<sup>11</sup> It was also during these years that Hus developed the religious vigor and fervor which would guide him into the terminally passionate stances which would define him later in life. While a student at Prague, and inspired by the reading of a life of St. Laurentius, he is said to have placed his hand into a roaring fire in order to test the strength of his own faith and resolve. He was forcibly discouraged from this pursuit by a friend who happened to be present.<sup>12</sup>

In 1400 and 1401 respectively, he became priest of Bethlehem church, and dean of the Theological Faculty.<sup>13</sup> He was also named as confessor to Queen Sophia of Bavaria, Wenzel's second wife.<sup>14</sup> Through this association, Hus gained favor at court, and developed friendships among the nobles and members of society that gathered there. In 1402, he became rector of the university, and was named as preacher of Bethlehem

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<sup>11</sup> Tanner, Norman. *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990), i, 433. Also accused of Wycliffism, Jerome is condemned on 30 May, 1416.

<sup>12</sup> Lützow, *Life and Times*, 70.

<sup>13</sup> Spinka, *Concept*, 9. Most of the references available note that Hus completed the work necessary to achieve a Doctorate, but never underwent the necessary examination.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Roubiczek and Joseph Kalmer, *Warrior of God: The Life and Death of John Hus* (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1947), 75.

church, aided at getting the post by John of Mullheim, a friend at court. He would hold that position for twelve years. The chapel would become so identified with its heterodox leader that in the height of anti-Hus fervor, it, like its leader, would be condemned to burn, though it would have somewhat more effective rescuers, being on somewhat safer ground.<sup>15</sup>

It was also during these formative years that Hus would find his first exposure to the writings of John Wycliffe. Wycliffe, the bulk of whose work was written between 1348 and 1384, was quickly assigned shocked notoriety for his writings, particularly for the *Trialogos*, in which he denounces the sacrament of transubstantiation, and sets forth a number of other doctrinal stances which must at the very least, be regarded as challenging to the ecclesiastical edifices of the day. However, it should be noted that due to either the slow spread of these writings (a possible but unlikely cause) or to the changing nature of theology and intellectual stances of the day, Wycliffe's writings were not wholly condemned during his life. It would only be after his death (and in conjunction with the Council of Constance and the trial of Hus) that Wycliffe's writings would be wholly degraded, and his body exhumed that it might be scattered following his *post-mortem* excommunication.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Gillett, i, 74. Gillett references Balbinus, who describes the inner trappings of the post-Hus Bethlehem chapel, and also Theobald, who wrote, nearly two hundred years later, of the chapel still standing, and of having seen Hus' own pulpit.

<sup>16</sup> Tanner, i, 411, 421. In session 8 of the Council of Constance (4 May, 1415), Wycliffe's writings are condemned, and his bones ordered to be exhumed and scattered. In session 15 of that same council (6 July 1415) Wycliffe's writings are again condemned, this time in conjunction with the sentencing of Hus as a Wycliffite heretic. Here too it must be noted that Wycliffe's writing *had* been condemned on a somewhat more regional level, but occurring during the Avignon schism, this was relatively easily ignored.

The existence of John Wycliffe, the nature of his writings, and his ultimate condemnation for heresy is germane to this work because of its importance in the eventual degradation and condemnation of Jan Hus for supposedly following those teachings. It should be noted that Hus' attitudes toward the writings of Wycliffe seem to have shifted radically between the time he was a student at Prague and his fateful summons to Constance. In 1398, Hus purportedly was exposed to one of Wycliffe's books by Jerome of Prague, who had returned from Oxford, bringing the book with him. Hus apparently saw the book as falling well outside orthodoxy, and is said to have advised Jerome to rid himself of the book, either by burning, or by heaving it into the Moldau, so that it might not fall into impressionable hands.<sup>17</sup> This account *may well be apocryphal*-- it does however at least represent a shift, though perhaps not of this extreme a nature, on the part of Hus in his attitude toward Wycliffe's works. In 1403, when a convocation of the University of Prague was called to deal with the issue of Wycliffe's writings and doctrines, Hus would neither support or condemn the works in question, because he, by his own words, found some of the material to be insupportable.<sup>18</sup> He did, however, attempt to mitigate the severity of the actions taken against those being accused of spreading Wycliffe's doctrines. Intriguingly, among the other voices lending support to the writings of Wycliffe during this time were Stanislaus of Znojoma, who had been

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<sup>17</sup> Gillett, i, 69. Here it needs to be noted that Gillett references, for the first time in his work, the writings of a "Theobald," without giving anything resembling a full bibliographical entry. It is obviously *not* the eleventh century botanical writer, but thus far exact identification of this writer remains elusive. This presents certain difficulties, because, for this particular event, Theobald is the only source.

<sup>18</sup> Lützow, *Life and Times*, 81. It is likely, given the other positions of Hus, that it was Wycliffe's stances on the Eucharist and transubstantiation which Hus found unacceptable. Paletz, on the other hand, is unequivocal in his support of Wycliffe's writings at this point.



among Hus' teachers, and Paletz, at the time a friend and supporter of Hus, but who would later prove so critical in the process of accusation against him. Regardless of the support which the writings of Wycliffe received, a denouncement of them was made, largely supported it seems by the German contingency of the faculty. This sentence forbade the defense or teaching of the forty-five articles of Wycliffe that had been condemned in England and further forbade any who had not achieved a Master's degree to read Wycliffe's books, especially the *Dialogus* and *Trialogus* which contained his most virulent attacks on the Eucharist.<sup>19</sup>

At this point, the machinery of the age, the split in the church which unavoidably affected every aspect of the era, and the inevitable rivalries for secular power which that split exacerbated began to form a vise in which the all-too-willing Jan Hus would find himself caught. Prague was central to Europe, and much which would affect the whole of Europe either began there, ended there or notably passed through. The rightful King of Bohemia was Wenzel, son of Charles IV. Wenzel, according to some sources was a notorious drunk, at one point exchanging a significant portion of his kingdom for several wagonloads of his favorite wine.<sup>20</sup> Wenzel was also, as Charles' eldest son, the heir apparent to the Holy Roman Empire. Unfortunately due to either his personal habits, or more likely, political weakness, Wenzel had been deposed as Emperor and replaced by Rupert, Count Palatine of the Rhine. Wenzel's brother Sigismund, already King of

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<sup>19</sup> Roubiczek and Kalmer, *Warrior*, 74-5.;also Gillett, *Life*, i, 70

<sup>20</sup> This was Nuremberg, which he is said to have exchanged for wine instead of 20,000 florins. In fairness, I would not trust any of the primary sources from this period, at least where anything having to do with Bohemia, The Holy Roman Empire, or the Church is concerned as far as I could throw one of those wagonloads of wine. Wenzel seems to have been, at least in later years, a heads-up, savvy, and even occasionally wise ruler, if something of an opportunist.

Hungary, had claimed the governorship of Bohemia at a point when Wenzel was imprisoned.

In 1403, Sigismund was at odds with Pope Boniface IX. Boniface was the Roman claimant to the papal throne and had supported Ladislaus, King of Naples, in a rival bid for Sigismund's throne. This support from Boniface came almost certainly with the hopes of reciprocal military support from Ladislaus<sup>21</sup>. In response, Sigismund had frozen all cash flow into Rome from within the territories under his control. During this time Hus, who had begun to speak out boldly against immorality within the church and particularly against indulgences, enjoyed the full support of the crown.<sup>22</sup>

Hus' actions had not gone unnoticed within the ranks of the church, however. One of these actions, and a subject of some of his writings, was an attack on the display of false miracles, particularly "host miracles." The fraudulent use of such "miracles" was being practiced by unscrupulous members of the clergy at the time.<sup>23</sup> Hus' preaching against this practice was even notably supported by Sbynco, Archbishop of Prague, who later would become for a time one of Hus' most vociferous detractors.

By 1408, Hus would embroil himself in another, more dangerous issue of church reform, that of the Papal schism which during those difficult years split the church. From Avignon, Benedict XIII claimed the tiara. The claimant voice of Gregory XII issued from Rome and would continue to do so until Constance. The world of the church was divided

<sup>21</sup> And, potentially to buy safe haven *from* Ladislaus; not an unreasonable idea, as later events would show.

<sup>22</sup> Gillett, i, 86.

<sup>23</sup> For an intriguing look at such Eucharist related miracles, an examination of Miri Rubin's *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (1991) particularly 112-115 is recommended. She suggests, as have others, that the period was extremely fertile ground for both miracles and miraculous charlatans.

wholly, if not evenly, between these two men. With regard to Hus and his closest influences, a rift would develop, with its roots firmly entrenched in the issue of rightful succession to the papacy. Hus himself rejected both men on the argument that the church needed untainted leadership. Sbynco, on the other hand, was among those who accepted Gregory as the legitimate pope. In 1408, the Council of Pisa was called to finally decide the issue, and it is after this that we find these two men at such a distinct state of enmity.

It should not be imagined for even the most fractional of moments that the papal schism was an issue wholly rooted in the purity and sanctity of the church. Each of the claimants to the papacy had his followers, and each of them had mortgaged his claims to the tiara with promises of support in political intrigues, in claims to kingdoms, and in promises of monetary support should they succeed. Each had also, in turn, made more than a few enemies; consider the twinned grievances of Sigismund and Wenzel.

Wenzel's deposition from the throne had come at the consent of Boniface, and Sigismund faced not only the very real threat of Moslem invasion, but also a challenge to his claim to the throne of Hungary by Ladislaus, with the full support of the pope.

In France, Benedict XIII had behaved so badly that the University of Paris called for his resignation. He responded by excommunicating the lot of them. When the bull was introduced in the French Parlement, it was torn to shreds. The French responded by sending troops to Avignon to arrest Benedict, but by the time they arrived, having received a message of warning, he had fled.

Gregory, likewise showed little willingness to relinquish Papal power. The two, each feeling growing pressure even from their clerical supporters to end the schism, even,

if need be, by means of cession from the papal throne, agreed to meet in order to work out a compromise. The meeting never took place, however, each afraid to leave the relative security of even secondary strongholds.

The supporters of Gregory began to mount pressure on the Pope to find a resolve to this situation. At a point when the situation seemed wholly intractable, Gregory, who despite being the Italian pontiff had been forced from the Italian seat of papal authority, received word that Ladislaus and his men had entered Rome. This strengthened Gregory's position beyond measure. With the renewed vigor of seizing the traditional papal stronghold, he became even more entrenched in his resolve against Benedict. In order to renew his support among the college of cardinals, he chose the unique approach of simply creating a number of new ones. Needless to say, this did nothing to please the existing ones.<sup>24</sup> Eventually they were driven to a call for a general council. Gregory responded by issuing a bull of excommunication against them, but he quickly discovered that a bull of excommunication against the very cardinals who would ordinarily call out the enforcement of an excommunication was not entirely effective. For their response, the cardinals ordered Gregory to appear at Lucca, that he might be deposed.

Benedict, meanwhile was not enjoying a vastly greater fortune. He himself had been driven from Avignon, and his supporters found themselves in grave danger. The rumble which had started at the University of Paris had spread through much of France as a national movement. Benedict found himself in a country dedicated to his enmity.

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<sup>24</sup> Gillett, i, 100.

The King of France, Charles VI, sent forth the message to all regional courts that obedience to *either* Pope had been withdrawn. He likewise sent word to his princes to renounce their allegiance to the two claimants and wrote to the cardinals of both Popes, calling upon them to proceed with the convocation of a general council. With their response in the affirmative, the wheel was put into inevitable motion for the calling of the Council of Pisa, on 25 March, 1409.

## TOO MANY POPES: THE COUNCIL OF PISA, 1409

The two groups of cardinals, each with its separate allegiances, had summoned their respective papal choices to a general council, to be held in Pisa, beginning on 25 March 1409. It is interesting to note that the letter sent to Gregory by his cardinals was by no means supportive. It is full of invective and wholly withdraws their support from him, warning him under threat of ecclesiastical trial to make himself present at the council.

Word of the impending council spread quickly throughout Europe. We can see in the varying degrees of approval with which the idea of convening a council was met some of the differing political climates which affected this ecclesiastical debate. The ecclesiastical and secular communities in England and France were generally in favor of the council, but in Germany, where papal alignment was stronger, the reception was somewhat cooler.

In Bohemia, the situation was even more unusual. There had long been a rivalry at the University of Prague between the Bohemian nationals and the representatives of the neighboring provinces. Four groups were officially represented within the governance of the university. In addition to the Bohemians, the regions of Bavaria, Saxony and Poland were represented and had a full vote in university affairs. This had long chafed the Bohemians who, not unreasonably, thought that they should have a greater say in the running of a Bohemian university. They also had the example of the University of Paris to turn to for precedential support for the idea of the host ethnicity of a university having a greater say. This conflict would have an unquestionable effect on the events which were to follow.

Wenzel also saw and seized the opportunity to distance himself from Gregory and to potentially weaken the grip of Rupert of Germany on the imperial throne.

Rupert had supported Gregory, and had also been supported by Gregory in seizing the title of Emperor despite the legitimate claims of both Wenzel and Sigismund. At this point Wenzel, who had supported Gregory, in the hope that Gregory would recognize his claim to the throne, ordered the Archbishop of Prague and the priests of the region to disobey Gregory.

Additionally, in accordance with royal policy, the four nations which made up the university were called together to rule on the condemnation of Gregory. It should be noted that the university was, by its nature, granted at least nominal intellectual autonomy, and could indeed vote to follow Gregory despite the order of the king to the clergy. Not surprisingly, given the national tendencies of the day, the other three nations threw their support behind Gregory, while the more reform minded Bohemians voted to follow the wishes of King Wenzel and call for Gregory's deposition. Sbyncó, Archbishop of Prague, came into the fray on the side of the Germans, in support of Gregory, and thus the decision of the university was to ignore the wishes of the king and continue in obedience to Gregory.

The vote of the university exacerbated the desire of the Bohemians to achieve a greater influence within the governing process. Hus, Stanislaus and Paletz saw this as a perfect opportunity to press the king for a vote equal with that of the other nations.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Gillett, i, 105. This requires a bit of explanation and exploration. There seem to be at least two variant opinions on when the will of the Bohemians concerning special national privilege was achieved. Gillett says that it came on January 18, 1409, while others have suggested that it may have come as early as autumn of 1408. Not a vast difference, to be sure, but an intriguing one. The possibility remains, given Wenzel's

The representatives of the university went to Kuttenberg, to inform the king of their decision. To the extreme dismay of the Bohemians, not only did the king (whom it should be remembered had issued his *own* anti-Gregory proclamation) support the Germans over the Bohemians, promising them that their majority would not be threatened, but he chose that venue and moment to rebuke the Bohemians, and most particularly Hus, for rumored heterodoxy.

On return to Prague, a dejected Hus was further beset by an extreme period of physical illness.<sup>26</sup> About that same time, however, word reached Prague that the king had changed his mind on the issue of Bohemian privilege in university representation. On January 18, 1409, a royal decree was sent forth proclaiming for the Bohemians equal voting rights with the other three nations of the university.

Shortly after this, Wenzel also issued a royal proclamation that the orders of Gregory XII were no longer to be obeyed, and that he was not to be accepted as pope.<sup>27</sup> Wenzel further directed that the secular authorities ensure that no subject was to receive any document of any kind from Gregory. The decree extended to all classes of people equally, the most notable, not surprisingly, being the clergy. The University condemned the proclamation, but the national assembly gave it resounding approval.

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apparently fickle nature, that such royal support was granted *both* times, (but only actually honored the second.)

<sup>26</sup> Lutzow, *Life and Times*, 106.

<sup>27</sup> Lutzow, *Life and Times*, 106; Gillett, i, 106. Bizarrely, Gillett here gives the date of the decree officially deposing Gregory on behalf of the kingdom as January 22, 1409, and then he states "*little more than a month after the decree respecting the rights of the Bohemians.*" Needless to say something is amiss with this timeline, for he has just scant lines before given the date of the previous decree as January 18, 1409. This frankly seems to call for further investigation at a more opportune moment.



Wenzel also sent an official letter to the cardinals, making clear his rejection of Gregory and voicing a desire to support the council. He also asserted his wish to be recognized as the rightful emperor. This posed certain problems and also certain solutions. Rupert, who had the throne, was an unflagging supporter of Gregory, and would never support a council dedicated to his ouster. This was troublesome, because the council ideally would have preferred to have the weight of imperial authority behind it. On the other hand, however, Rupert had recently made military forays into Italy itself, which had somewhat undermined his authority. That, combined with the varying levels of dedication to Gregory's cause found throughout Rupert's empire weakened his position to the point that the cardinals were willing to support the claims to the throne of Wenzel. He, for his part, lent the council its needed imperial backing.

On other fronts, each of the papal claimants had decided to call his own council. Benedict, with scant but influential supporters, convened a council at Perpignan, on November 1, 1408. Not to be outdone, and equally unwilling to present himself as a willing sacrifice at Pisa, Gregory called for a council of his own, which would meet on July 22, 1409, in Friuli. The location of this council, falling as it did in Venetian territory and therefore under the control of Ladislaus, would play a significant role in later events.<sup>28</sup>

When the council called by Benedict met in November, 1408, it had few in attendance. Benedict had had a smaller number of adherents to begin with and those had

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<sup>28</sup> Gillett, i, 108. Gregory settled on Friuli as something of a bronze-medal site for his council. He was unwelcome in Rome, Venice itself was somewhat aligned with Pisa, Florence was sided with the French, and Genoa was trying valiantly to retain a semblance of neutrality.

dwindled as the vitriol of the schism had increased. The number of those in attendance was further reduced by the fact that Charles VI had posted soldiers on the roads to prevent participation. Many of that few who actually reached Perpignan quickly joined the ranks of those who had already become disillusioned with Benedict, and abandoned him. The few remaining were not in accord by any means, but they eventually decided to send a representation to Pisa, to negotiate for their choice for pope. They were to be disappointed, because by the time they reached Pisa, the name of Benedict elicited such venom that they were forced to abandon their efforts and vacate Pisa secretly.<sup>29</sup>

By this time, the Council of Pisa itself had begun. Unlike Benedict, Gregory refused either to appear himself or to send representatives.<sup>30</sup> As was the custom for such gatherings, the first session was dedicated to a mass and ceremonies relevant to its commencement. During the second session, the canon of Toledo, which set the standard for the calling of councils was read.<sup>31</sup> It was followed by a call for the appearance of the two rival claimants. Neither, however, either appeared in person or sent a representative. At the beginning of the third session, a similar call for the presence of the two was made, with similar results. At this point, the two popes were declared to be in a state of contumacy.

The next several sessions of the council proceeded in like manner, aside from the representatives of Rupert attempting to delay and sidetrack the council by several means, including an attempted filibuster. Nonetheless, Benedict and Gregory were repeatedly

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<sup>29</sup> Gillett, i, 111.

<sup>30</sup> Edward H Landon, *A Manual of Councils of the Holy Catholic Church*. (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1909) ii, 48.

<sup>31</sup> Landon, ii, 49.

accused of contumacy and degraded. It was eventually<sup>32</sup> decided that a partial cessation of obedience would not be effective, but that a general boycott was needed, and that the participation of those cardinals who were loyal to the two claimants was required.

Finally, during the fifteenth session, a decisive decree was drawn up, declaring the two in question to be “schismatical, abettors of schism, heretics, and guilty of perjury; that they had given offence to the whole Church by their obstinacy, that they had forfeited every dignity, and were, *ipso facto* separated from the Church.”<sup>33</sup> The council further decreed that the body of the church was forbidden, under threat of excommunication to give even the appearance of obedience to the two. It also nullified the most recent round of election of cardinals made by Benedict and Gregory.

Back in Prague, things were becoming interesting. Before the Bohemian delegation had left for Pisa, the King had issued his proclamation in favor of national privilege for the Bohemians. The time came for the annual elections of officers for the university, and the members of the other nations began to proceed in the manner they had been accustomed to for many years. At that point, Nicholas Von Lobkowicz, at whose urging the initial proclamation had been made, appeared at the university and demanded in the name of royal authority that the dean and rector give up their badges of office. He then proceeded to appoint Zdenek Von Labaun and Simon Von Tisnow and rector and dean respectively. The Germans were, to say the least, nonplused. They gathered themselves together, and left town in a huff, stopping only to burn down the theological

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<sup>32</sup> Landon, ii, 49. These took place at sessions 6 and 7 respectively.

<sup>33</sup> Landon, ii, 49.

college.<sup>34</sup> Roubiczek and Kalmer state that the mass of students exited Prague on May 16, 1409, and that accounts of the size of the number of people in that collection of wagons and horsemen varied from one to forty thousand, with probable legitimate estimate of two thousand.<sup>35</sup>

These two elements of force now fell in such a way as to pincer Hus. With those who had become irate and left Prague was the newly appointed rector, Zdenek Von Labaun. With the German/Polish crowd and him out of the way, the position of rector fell to Master Hus. At the same time, Hus was in Pisa, and facing a potential problem in the form of Sbynco, the Archbishop of Prague. Sbynco it must be remembered had chosen to remain loyal to Gregory and had been a significant part of that movement in Prague that had opposed the convocation of the Council of Pisa in the first place.

In Pisa, things were proceeding apace. On June 15, 1409, the council voted to elect a new pope. While this would by no means be a quick or painless happening, there were elements working behind the scenes to speed and direct the process. The most notable of these was a man named Balthasar Cossa, a name which in its original incarnation is little remembered by history. Balthasar Cossa would become John XXIII at the death of the man he worked so feverishly to promote as pope, Peter Philargi, also known as Peter of Candia.<sup>36</sup> Philargi was the Cardinal of Milan, a Franciscan, and would become Pope Alexander V.<sup>37</sup> By every account, Alexander was a good, decent, and just

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<sup>34</sup> Gillett, i, 135. Although Prague would have good reason to be miffed about such bad behavior in the short term, in the long run Europe would have a reason to thank this crowd of rowdies. The errant students went off and founded the University of Leipzig.

<sup>35</sup> Roubiczek and Kalmer, *Warrior*, 95.

<sup>36</sup> Landon, ii, 51.

<sup>37</sup> Lützow, *Life and Times*, 95.

man. In short, a man wholly unqualified to ascend the papal throne under the circumstances of the day. Pope Innocent VII had named him as cardinal. On July 7, 1409, he was burdened with the tiara. A month later, after a few other unremarkable proclamations, the council ended.

Just before the end of the Council of Pisa, the council which Gregory had called at Friuli was commencing, on July 22, 1409. Its primary functions were to condemn the actions taken by the Council of Pisa and to affirm the papal claims of Gregory. This was, for the moment, however, to have little meaning. Orders had gone out for his arrest, and the countryside was no longer safe for him. Gregory escaped by means of disguise and duplicity, having sent a servant out in his own clothes and dressing himself as a merchant in order to slip past soldiers who had been assembled for his arrest.

The reaction of Europe to this newest, now third, pope was mixed, as may be imagined. France and England gave Alexander their support, France astoundingly so.<sup>38</sup> Germany was largely supportive of the decision of the council, despite the continued support of Gregory by the Emperor. Florence and Siena both paid the new pope homage. Bohemia was, on the parts of both king and people, nearly unanimous in its accord with the decision of the council. Sbynco, the archbishop, on the other hand remained, perhaps to his credit, firmly supportive of Gregory as the rightful pope.<sup>39</sup>

It should not, however, be mistakenly imagined that the people of Europe were unified in their support of Alexander or their praise of the decisions made at Pisa. Genoa,

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<sup>38</sup> Gillett, i, 119. Gillett speaks of the French lining the streets at the arrival of his legate, shouting *Vive Alexander, our Pope!*

<sup>39</sup> Gillett, ii, 120. Spain, Gillett tells us, remained in full support of Benedict. They seem to have been alone in this fidelity.

among other cities, did not recognize the new pope. Moreover, many individual intellectuals and theologians recognized the inherent danger of producing yet a *third* claimant to the papal throne. In many ways, instead of the healing and conciliatory effect which most of the attendants of Pisa had wished, the church was now further divided, and further weakened.

This trend would only be furthered by the actions taken by the new pope. One of his first official acts was to issue a bull in favor of the mendicants. This directly contradicted bulls which had been issued by preceding popes. It also immediately drew the consternation of much of Europe. The mendicants had not had a stellar record in their relationship with the local churches. They had, in fact, managed to annoy, insult, harass, and generally make a nuisance of themselves throughout the continent and in England.

This proclamation might have been indicative of the direction which Alexander would have taken had he remained in the papal seat longer than he did. Other factors would come into play which would deprive the world of the chance to truly learn just what manner of pope Alexander V might have made.

## TENSIONS HEIGHTEN: FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN PRAGUE

With a new pope ostensibly trying to unite the church and the world of which it was a part, things could really only get worse. In Prague the situation had become dangerous. Sbynco was still firmly in support of Gregory, and Hus was anything but quiet in his clamor for reform within the church. Sbynco and Hus had not been on the best of terms before the Council of Pisa. Hus had, by this point, long been a supporter of *some* of Wycliffe's writings and the reform philosophy which they espoused. Sbynco, on the other hand, had, fully two years before the Pisan council issued a proclamation ordering the clergy to support the doctrine of transubstantiation from the pulpit, a proclamation essentially directly aimed at the writings of Wycliffe<sup>40</sup>.

While this was not something which Hus had a problem supporting on a *prima facie* basis, underlying it was a rhetoric which directly spoke to a personal point of insurmountable difference between Sbynco and him. Now that Sbynco was essentially in a greatly weakened position, still supporting a papal claimant whom King, country and the Council of Pisa had uniformly rejected, Hus no longer felt any constraint against using his pulpit as a platform from which to express his support for the ideas of the English reformer. Sbynco was not one simply to ignore the situation in which he found himself. He responded to his weakened position and the perceived reprobate nature of Hus and the supporters of Pisa by issuing a decree forbidding all members of the

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<sup>40</sup> Spinka, *Concept*, 54-5.

university who had supported the election of Alexander V from fulfilling their priestly duties within any area under his control.

Hus, displaying his usual reserve and caution, reacted by not only refusing the order of the archbishop but by increasing the vehemence with which he preached the rejection of Gregory as pope, the condemnation of wicked and worldly priests, and the support of the more reform oriented Wycliffite articles. This of course further exacerbated the situation and also inclined the clergymen whom he was condemning to add their support to Sbynco's cause.

The king, himself, was brought into the fray. Sbynco petitioned Wenzel to deal with Hus and his crowd. Here Wenzel seems to have shown a clear-headed nature which some writers would not have one readily expect of him.<sup>41</sup> Wenzel responded by letting the archbishop know that he was on his own. It was all to Wenzel's advantage to give Hus his head in this matter. Not only did Hus have the ear of the people, but he directly spoke out against the supporter of the Bohemian king's closest political foil.

The timing could not have been worse for Sbynco. The temporal strength of Gregory was diminishing seemingly by the moment. Rome had slipped from the control of Ladislaus. Alexander now controlled the seat of papal authority. In desperation Sbynco finally withdrew his support from Gregory and began to seek alliance with Alexander V.

This shift, and perhaps a certain recklessness brought about either by a perception of weakness on the part of his rival or simply by his dedication to his cause, would carry

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<sup>41</sup> Gillett and others are very quick to portray Wenzel as a lazy, venal, and even cowardly fool of a besotted pseudo-king. In truth, here, and elsewhere, Wenzel shows a tendency to be not only aware of the more far-ranging implications of his rule, but quick-witted and savvy.



with its new dangers to the preacher of Bethlehem chapel. Hus had advanced from just preaching the words of Wycliffe from his pulpit. He had translated a number of the writings of Wycliffe into the Bohemian vernacular, including that most dangerous and heretical of all of Wycliffe's writings, the Trialogos. His praise of Wycliffe in public setting, even from the pulpit, also reached new levels.

These increasingly public alliances with what were unquestionably the most heretical writings of Wycliffe brought quick response, even from some alarming directions. That the more conservative members of the university faculty admonished him to change his wicked ways was not surprising. A more unpleasant circumstance, however, came in the form of the actions of a former friend. Andrew of Broda had been a schoolmate and associate of Hus. With growing evidence of Hus' embrace of Wycliffite thought, he broke with Hus, and sought the counsel of the archbishop.

With the situation in Prague brought to his full attention, Sbynco felt compelled to respond. He ordered that all heretical writings be brought to him.<sup>42</sup> Hus himself brought some of the material in question before the archbishop, asking that he be shown exactly where they fell into discord with scriptural writings. Sbynco was not to be swayed in this matter, however. The ecclesiastical judges he had assembled for this purpose ruled that the writings of Wycliffe were to be consigned to the pyre. The order for surrender of

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<sup>42</sup> Spinka, *Concept*, 81, 89-97; Gillett, i, 146. Here Gillett states that Sbynco called not only for the surrender of the writings of Wycliffe, but also for those of Milicz, Janow, Jerome and Hus. He then admits in a footnote that this statement is in serious question and that he has no primary source support for it but that he simply chose to include it anyway.

those works went out, and more than two hundred copies of the various writings of Wycliffe were gathered to be burned.<sup>43</sup>

None of this met with anything resembling approval at the university. It had long been a standing privilege of the university that they obeyed not the archbishop but the pope, and that it was their right to petition the latter in cases of discord with the former. Moreover, it had long been held that Masters and Doctors were capable of reading “heretical” texts for the purpose of intellectual examination without peril to the steadfastness of their faith and without peril to their souls. Sbynco’s edict violated at the very least the spirit, if not the letter, of all three of these traditions. Regardless, all but five members of the university complied with the order of the archbishop. At their urging and in its own defense, the university sent a delegate to Bologna and the pope to argue that Sbynco’s action violated the rights of the university. The masters at Bologna took the side of the scholars in Prague, and the pope ordered that Sbynco come before him to defend his actions. It was further ordered that the archbishop’s edict be suspended until this defense was complete.

Sbynco, himself, had been busy. He also had sent a delegate to Bologna, who gained the ear of the pope. The archbishop thus obtained a papal bull not only condemning Wycliffe’s writings but also prohibiting preaching in private chapels, an order which struck at the heart of Hus’ interaction with the people of Prague. Additionally, it called upon the archbishop to empower a commission to stop the further

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<sup>43</sup> Gillett, i, 147.

spread of heresy in Bohemia. The completion of these commendations would be interrupted by another event, with more sinister implications, the death of Alexander V.<sup>44</sup>

Alexander V had been, if most accounts are to be granted the weight of credibility, a relatively good pope. It is worth noting that of all of the popes of the day, Alexander V, while labeled by history as an anti-pope, has never been nullified by the replacement of his name and was, indeed, strengthened in his historical position by the actions of Rodriguez Borja y Borja when he took for his own papal title that of Alexander VI. Alexander had been forwarded as a candidate for the papacy at the Council of Pisa, as has been previously stated, by one Balthasar Cossa. Balthasar was born to a nobleman of Naples, who though well placed socially, was not particularly sound financially. As a youth, Balthasar had made something of a career out of professional bloodshed, including a notable stint as either a pirate or a naval warrior.<sup>45</sup> It was during these formative years that Cossa would learn many of the skills which would serve him so fully on his way to the throne of the church. Gillett states outright that at the Council of Constance he was “openly and publicly charged with having poisoned Alexander V to make way for his own election”.<sup>46</sup> Constance would further charge him, in its twelfth session, with “detestable and dishonest life and morals, both before his promotion to the papacy and

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<sup>44</sup> Gillett, i, 149.

<sup>45</sup> Gillett, i, 188; Lützow, *Life and Times*, 96. Gillett here specifically refers to the young Cossa as having been a pirate, while Lützow suggests that the accusation laid against Cossa of piracy was likely founded on his having taken part in Neapolitan naval warfare. Which is more likely seems to be a matter of pure conjecture.

<sup>46</sup> Tanner, i, 147; Gillett, i, 187. Gillett does not give the specific session in which this happened. Tanner, in *Decrees* gives a somewhat enigmatic listing for the eleventh session, saying only that John XXIII is publicly charged and forty-four specific articles are drawn up against him. It would seem likely that the charge of poisoning was among these.

afterwards until the present time.”<sup>47</sup> The council would also say of him that he was “ a notorious simoniac, a notorious destroyer of ... goods and rights ... and an evil administrator and dispenser of the church’s spiritualities and temporalities.”<sup>48</sup> If anything, the council was probably reserved in its assessment of Balthasar’s character.

The death of Alexander, by whatever method, was seen as somewhat fortuitous by the supporters of Wycliffite teaching in Prague. The idea was circulated and widely approved that the enforceability of the pope’s order died when he did, and that it was therefore null and void. The university also protested the blanket prohibition against the writings of Wycliffe, when many of them were not in the least heretical.<sup>49</sup>

Sbynco was hardly inactive throughout this period. He drew up bans of excommunication against Hus, Zladislaw of Wartenberg, and three of the five students who had protested his previous order. This would, at least for the moment, matter little to Hus, who would ignore it just as surely as he had ignored the papal proscription against preaching in private chapels. The obedience of the people at large to the rulings of the archbishop was notably lacking, for that matter. An appeal went before Wenzel, on the part of the university on June 15, 1410, asking that he prevent Sbynco from carrying out his intent to burn the books of Wycliffe. Wenzel granted this injunction, promising that he would see to it that it did not take place. He then obtained the word of the archbishop that he would not act on the order until Jost, Margrave of Moravia arrived in Prague.

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<sup>47</sup> Tanner, i, 417.

<sup>48</sup> Tanner, i, 417.

<sup>49</sup> Spinka, *Concept*, 94.

One month to the day later, Sbynco, incensed by Hus' continued attacks from the pulpit of Bethlehem Chapel, burned the books. Accounts of the event say that the city's tower-bells rang in the manner of a funeral. An armed force was called out by the archbishop to prevent a disturbance at the burning. Needless to say, while Sbynco may have achieved his short-term goals, the real fire which was lit on that day in Prague would quickly grow out of control. Gillett, in his *Life and Times of John Huss* words it superbly "the citizens of Prague were enraged . . . . A cry of indignation ran throughout Bohemia . . . . The queen wept, and Wenzel cursed aloud."<sup>50</sup> Some of the angry citizens of Prague engaged in rather extroverted acts, including violence against clergy, damage of property, and the singing of ribald and contemptuous songs about Sbynco. This latter got so bad that Wenzel was forced for the sake of decorum to issue orders of forbearance against it. On the third day following, the decree announcing the excommunication of Hus and his associates was read publicly.

As if all of this were not enough turmoil for one city at one time, a further complication arose. Not all of those, it seemed, who were in possession of the writings of John Wycliffe had felt fully compelled by the archiepiscopal order to surrender them to the flames. This troubled not only Sbynco, whose order had been ignored, but also that portion of the populace whose books *had* been burned, despite the king's assurances. They were not, however, angry that their neighbors still had their books. Those were being hand copied and redistributed. The owners of the books which had been burned were instead furious with the archbishop. They took their complaints to the king, who

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<sup>50</sup> Gillett, i, 157.

agreed with them, and ordered Sbynco to reimburse them for the cost of the books, an order which he refused. The people, in response, tried to drown one Carmelite monk and assaulted two others, who had been accused of preaching against Wycliffe. The gulf between the opposing forces in Prague was widening by the day.

The events which followed would do nothing to lessen the trend. Hus had appealed the ruling of Alexander V to his successor, John XXIII. John, never one to do a job he could assign to someone else, handed the matter to a commission of four cardinals, including Otho de Colonna, who would become Pope Martin V at the Council of Constance in 1417. Before they could rule on Hus' petition, a delegation arrived representing the archbishop of Prague. After hearing their presentation, John dissolved the earlier formed group and directed Otho de Colonna to handle the matter.

Colonna was completely unsympathetic to the cause of Hus, certifying the edicts issued by both Alexander V and Sbynco, ordering Sbynco to enforce the edicts with the aid of the secular authorities if necessary, and ordering Hus to appear before a papal court to answer the charges against him.<sup>51</sup> Hus was reasonably reticent to do so, though probably not simply from fear of the actions of the court, but also due to the wandering brigands, many of whom were German and inclined both toward anti-Bohemian and anti-Hus hostility.<sup>52</sup> With this in mind, the king sent an embassy, consisting of Dr. John Nas, and the Cardinal of Reinstein to the pope to ask that the demand that Hus appear be

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<sup>51</sup> Spinka, *Concept*, 98.

<sup>52</sup> Gillett, i, 166. I frankly am somewhat hesitant to include this statement. Gillett makes this argument, but it seems to me that Hus probably had, considering the later actions of Constance, as much to fear from the pope and the papal tribunal as from any bands of wandering Germans. This statement itself draws significant questions about anti-German bias on the part of Gillett.

lifted. Their appeal was denied without consideration. Moreover, because Hus continued to preach despite his now very public excommunication, Sbynco placed the city of Prague under a ban of interdiction, effectively closing every church in the city.

This was a situation which was wholly unacceptable. Officially, the activities of the church in Prague were suspended. The people complained bitterly to the king, and Wenzel called upon Sbynco to compromise. A commission was called to examine and rule on the subject, which decided that both parties were to cease legal prosecutions of the other, that Sbynco should retract both the sentence of excommunication and the interdict, and further that Sbynco should write the pope, explaining the cessation of enmity between Hus and him, that no heresy found a home in Bohemia, and that he should withdraw the demand that Hus appear. The letter never found its way to the pope. Nonetheless, the weight of the archiepiscopal interdict was withdrawn. Sbynco had effectively lost the battle. The king, driven by expedience and the will of the people (and possibly that of the queen, whose confessor Hus was) had taken a stand against the church and, at least in that moment, won. Hus for his part only increased the level of his reformist preaching, drawing occasional rebukes from Sbynco. These were generally ignored, prompting Sbynco to complain to the king, but Wenzel no longer even gave the appearance of paying attention to the archbishop's cause. The people joined the rebellious spirit of the day, challenging Sbynco to demand that they deliver more books up to be burned "and see whether we will obey him."<sup>53</sup> Sbynco again sought to complain to the king, but by this time Wenzel would not even entertain Sbynco's presence at court.

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<sup>53</sup> Gillett, i, 175. Gillett here references *Mart. Anec.*, iv, 386.

Frustrated beyond measure at this royal refusal to grant his complaint even so much as a hearing, Sbynco made plans to withdraw from Prague and go to Hungary to seek the aid of Wenzel's brother Sigismund. After writing a lengthy and sorrowful letter listing all of the real and imagined wrongs he felt he had suffered in Prague and all of the spiritual and ecclesiastical wrongs done by the unmanageable reformers, he set out for Hungary to address the court of Sigismund. It was a journey he would never complete. Exhausted by the long fight he had engaged in with Hus, demoralized by the failure of Gregory to retain the papacy, and now rejected by the king, Sbynco died in Presberg, on September 28, 1411.<sup>54</sup> His body was returned to Prague for interment. Although the man who had been his primary rival for the previous five years was dead, Hus was not safe. The real fight which Hus faced was yet to come.

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<sup>54</sup> Gillett, i, 177; Lützow, 95. Gillett here makes a delicious set of references, *Mart. Anec*, iv, 418-419; *Fleury*, xxv, 312; and *Godeau*, xxxvi, 292., which he states in the text have suggested that Sbynco was poisoned. He offsets the suggestion by stating that "we need not, as some have done, impute his death to poison." If he truly felt this was not a possibility, why does he address the issue? Furthermore, why are we to believe that these three sources are unreliable in their assessment of the possibility that Sbynco was poisoned, when Gillett asks the reader to assume their reliability with regard to other issues of Hus' life. Lützow feel no similar compunction. He simply states that Sbynco was almost certainly poisoned.



## A MORE DANGEROUS FOE

The combined elements of the ascendancy of John XXIII to the papal throne and the death of Sbynco were further complicated by a number of other matters. Scant days after the election of John XXIII, Rupert, the emperor died. This left both Wenzel and Sigismund in something of a contest to see who would win the imperial throne. Moreover, a new archbishop had been appointed to Prague, and both the university and the crown were attempting to accustom themselves to him.

Accounts of Albic, the man chosen by Wenzel to succeed Sbynco vary but they virtually all share one common trait, that of being uniformly unflattering. Fortunately for the citizens of Prague, he did not enjoy an extended tenure in the position. The real problem which would face both Prague and Hus was John XXIII. The new pope had had problems with Ladislaus as far back as the papal reign of Gregory, and now those problems became intolerable. Ladislaus had gone so far as to attack Rome itself and in so doing had for the second time invited not only papal excommunication but the ultimate meeting of papal authority and temporal strength, a crusade. John XXIII called on all of Christendom to join in his personal vendetta against Ladislaus,<sup>55</sup> offering full indulgence to any who would either take up arms or who would donate money equaling one month's expenditure if one was actually on said crusade. Hus, as was his nature, found a way to take exception to this, objecting on the basis that it was not an example of well practiced Christian charity for the high priest of the church to call for a crusade against a fellow believer.

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<sup>55</sup> Spinka, *Concept*, 109.

Hus was not the only one to object to this papal foray. The people of Prague were being heavily pressured by the clergy to donate to this cause and in turn complained to the king about the effect which this was having on their personal economies. The king, himself, it should be noted, expressed displeasure that this money was flowing from Prague to Rome, and thus out of both the local economy and the royal coffers. Thus with general disapproval flowing freely in Prague, the members of the papal legate who had been sent to deliver the actual indulgences expected Hus to balk at their issue.

Hus was summoned before the archbishop-- still Albic at this point --and was pressed on the issue of whether he would obey the papal order. In his reply, he essentially stated that he would follow the papal order only so long as it did not disagree with scripture. He further said that if it did disagree with scripture, he would not obey even on pain of death.<sup>56</sup>

For the first time, Hus had placed himself squarely in a position of challenging papal authority. Moreover, this pope, John XXIII, was at the very least an extension of the choice of the Council of Pisa. He was the clear choice of the king, both because of his earlier embrasure of the council *and* because of his opposition to Ladislaus, Wenzel's clear rival for the imperial throne. John also had the approval of the university, again as the choice borne out by Pisa. Even Hus himself had recognized this man as rightful heir to the fisherman's ring. Hus no longer stood in opposition to one archbishop's pride but to the lawful pope. For all of these and other reasons, Hus would now find himself on his

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<sup>56</sup> Spinka, *Concept*, 117.

own. Here Wenzel could not support him, and the number of people still willing to side with the reformer began to dwindle.

Stephen Paletz, one of the teachers who had been instrumental in the formation of Hus' theology parted ways with him. Paletz preferred the more passive approach to the problem of the proposed crusade. In June of 1412, Hus nailed notices to the doors of a number of churches, proclaiming that on June 17 he would publicly debate anyone on the matter of the papal bull of crusade against Ladislaus. On the appointed day, the university tried to keep the public away by saying that the common people could not understand such matters. Nonetheless, mobs of unruly Bohemians being what they will<sup>57</sup> the public attended and understood the involved particulars well enough to become aroused about the issue. This meeting was followed not long after by another, somewhat more peaceable gathering. The people of Prague, however, had by now become involved in the process. A procession of public mockery for the edict ran through the streets. Additionally, not long after the public debates, church services which were either pro-crusade or anti-Hus were disrupted by three individuals, who were arrested and thrown into the city prison. The city council was entreated by both the people *and* Hus himself to show mercy to the three young men who stood accused. After giving Hus and the assembled mob reason to believe that the three might be shown some clemency, the council had them executed on a charge of disturbing the peace.

Having been fully primed by the actions of the university, the heat of the debates and the atmosphere of the day, Prague went wild. The council house was seized, but the

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<sup>57</sup> Lützow, *Life and Times*, 151. My heartfelt thanks just here to Mr. Joseph Isenberg for inspiration.

council had already scarpered. The bodies of the three executed men were removed from the tombs where they had been hurriedly secreted and were carried though the streets in a solemn procession as martyrs.<sup>58</sup>

Hus, in a funeral service for one of the three, proclaimed them to be martyrs of the faith and said "Henceforth no communion can exist between the adherents of Rome and the Bohemian Christians."<sup>59</sup> Surely no more direct message could have been sent by the Bohemian reformer. Hus had clearly and surely set himself against pope and church. As fortune would have it, at this most opportune of moments, Hus regained the support of the king. This was almost certainly more due to the fact that the pope had named Sigismund as emperor at the death of Rupert. Wenzel had hoped that the aid he had shown at Pisa would re-secure him his rightful title, but both Sigismund's location and his opposition to Ladislaus made him the more attractive candidate.

By July 1412, responsibility for dealing with Hus was given to Cardinal Peter de Angelis, who confirmed Hus' excommunication. The ruling went forth that, in Gillett's words

None might give him food or drink. None might buy of him or sell to him. None might converse with him or have intercourse with him. None might give him lodging, or allow him fire or water. Every city or castle where he might reside was put under interdict. The sacraments could not be administered there. All religious worship was suspended there.<sup>60</sup>

Hus was also, should he die while the ban was against him, to be denied consecrate burial. Further, John XXIII issued orders that Hus was to be seized and brought before the Archbishop of Prague and that Bethlehem church, his pulpit, was to be

<sup>58</sup> Lützow, *Life and Times*, 157.

<sup>59</sup> Gillett, i, 218.

<sup>60</sup> Gillett, i, 226; also Roubiczek and Kalmer, *Warrior*, 139.

razed.<sup>61</sup> Though this last element would never come about, the damage had been done. Hus was becoming a liability in Prague.

With these newest pronouncements, some of those who had previously supported Hus began to withdraw their support one by one. Among these were some of the university's theological faculty, including Paletz, Stanislaus, Andrew Broda, and John Elia. The loss of their support and the effect he was having on the city of Prague were no doubt key factors in his decision to step down from the pulpit of Bethlehem chapel and leave Prague in late 1412. It is unclear whether Wenzel had a hand in his decision. Before leaving Hus published a letter in which he renewed his claim of innocence, gave his reasons for not travelling to Rome, accused his foes of undue malice, and called for a release from the excommunication. This would seem a reasonable appeal for a man in such circumstances. However here too, Hus took what would turn out to be the path of greatest resistance, for it was not to the archbishop, any of the cardinals, or even the pope to whom Hus addressed this appeal, but to God himself, thus opening a whole new theological kettle of fish. Suddenly in addition to all of the other perceived heretical acts and stances of Hus, he now had appealed to God for release from a papal order, when that very order was supposed to be the word of God given to man by his earthly representative.

During 1412 and 1413, Hus would travel from place to place in Bohemia, preaching to groups which would gather to hear him. He also continued to make full use of the pen, writing a number of letters to the college of cardinals, treatises on his

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<sup>61</sup> Roubiczek and Kalmer, *Warrior*, 139.

innocence, and letters defending his flight from Prague. He spent much of this time at the castles of Kozi-Hra'dek and Cracowec. During this same period, John XXIII called a council in Rome, at which the writings of Wycliffe were declared to be heretical. Hus also reportedly continued to make occasional appearances in Prague, about which the clergy complained bitterly to the archbishop, but with little hope of actually achieving any results. It was also during this period that Hus wrote one of his most controversial works, *On the Church*.

In Prague, the continued influence of Hus, combined with a number of ecclesiastical decisions which, while unenforceable on a practical level, seemed almost designed to rouse anti-papal sentiments within the people had resulted in first an abusive attitude toward the clergy and ultimately in acts of violence. The king, while a practical man where the dangers of actually having Hus in the city were concerned, had taken a pro-reform stance himself, even ordering that pay was to be withheld from clergy found to be unworthy.<sup>62</sup> It was also during this time that Wenzel, becoming increasingly impatient with the situation in Prague called a commission to find a way to deal with the "difficulties" and then banished four of its members when they refused even the most fractional of compromises.<sup>63</sup> He also weakened the German influence in city affairs by replacing one of the German members of the council with a Bohemian.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Gillett, i, 272.

<sup>63</sup> Lützwow, *Concept*, 175. Lützwow lists those ejected as including Palec, a fact worth noting when considering his level of vitriol at Constance.

<sup>64</sup> Gillett, i, 272. Gillett here says with aplomb that the replacement came about when one of the Germans was executed "for some cause." Handy timing, that, having to execute a German member of the council just at a time when the king was looking for a way to defuse the lethal atmosphere in Prague at the time.

All of this must, however, be set against a backdrop of other events in Europe at the time. Bohemia was far from the only area of dissent within the church. Each of the other two sides in the pre-Pisa schism still had their adherents, and both of these found ways to cause trouble from time to time. Furthermore, the Holy Roman Empire was under threat from both within and without Christendom. Sigismund still felt threat from the Muslims as well as from rivals for his crown far closer to home. All of these elements and others prompted Sigismund to lend his authority, in October 1413<sup>65</sup>, to the calling of a council to assemble in Constance on October 3, 1414. With a great deal of effort, Sigismund browbeat John XXIII into accession to the notion. In the letter calling for the convocation of the council, Sigismund ordered Jan Hus to appear and address the charges of which he was accused. Wenzel was ordered to see to it that Hus attended. Thus it was that the church, the princes of the world, and Jan Hus all prepared to come together in the city of Constance in the year 1414.

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<sup>65</sup>Roubiczeck and Kalmer, 163.

## ENDGAME: THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANCE, 1415

To fully detail the events surrounding and including the Council of Constance could easily become the work of a lifetime and fill several weighty volumes. It may be that never before or since have such a collection of nobility, both ecclesiastical and temporal, been assembled in one place at one time. It is also likely that such a collection of cutthroats, debauchers, sots, thieves, and ne'er-do-wells has never come together *en masse* in such a fashion since. The majesty, the grandeur, the spectacle of this council stands as one of the most impressive moments in the history of the world, let alone the church. Landon, in his *Manual of Councils of the Holy Catholic Church* says that not less than thirty thousand horses were present in the city, by which one may begin to understand the influx of humanity into the city.<sup>66</sup> And equal to the physical marvel of the council was the astounding levels of intrigue and duplicity which inseparably marbled the event. Into this snarled human traffic jam came Jan Hus.

Constance had been chosen by the emperor as the site for the council, much to the displeasure of the pope, who would have preferred a somewhat less neutral location. Nonetheless, John XXIII had acceded to its convocation, and he issued a proclamation that all prelates should attend, and that all of the princes of Christendom should at least send representatives. The only one of the three claimants to the papal tiara present was John XXIII, and his appearance at Constance came at the price of a number of written assurances by Sigismund that he would be recognized as the rightful pontiff, that he

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<sup>66</sup> Landon, i, 173. Not that this should be interpreted as a "one man, one horse" situation; Landon also says that one archbishop was known to have arrived with six *hundred* horses, prompting afterward limitation on the number of horses each attendee could bring.



would be free to leave at his will, and that his authority over his retinue, including his assurances of safe conduct, were to be recognized. Because of his need for John's attendance at Constance, and because his relationship with the pope had been weakened by the death of Ladislaus, one of the pope's most dangerous enemies, Sigismund readily agreed to these conditions. Sigismund's word on these matters was every bit as worthy as that which he offered Hus. John left Bologna for Constance in October of 1414.

About that same time, Hus received from Sigismund a letter promising him safe conduct to, and more notably, given the results of the council, *from* Constance, to wit:

Sigismund, by the grace of God, King of the Romans, etc.:-- To all princes, ecclesiastical and lay, and all our other subjects, greeting. Of our full affection, we recommend to all in general, and to each individually, the honorable man, Master John Huss, bachelor in theology and master of arts, the bearer of these presents, going from Bohemia to the Council of Constance, whom we have taken under our protection and safeguard, and under that of the empire, requesting, when he arrives among you, that you will receive him kindly and treat him favorably, furnishing him whatever shall be necessary to promote and secure his journey, whether by water or by land, without taking anything from him or his, at his entrance or his departure, on any claim whatever; but let him freely and securely pass, sojourn, stop, and return; providing him, if necessary, with good passports, to the honor and respect of the imperial majesty. Given at Spire, Oct. 18, 1414.<sup>67</sup>

Hus would also obtain, before his departure, a letter from the grand inquisitor of Prague a letter certifying his orthodoxy. He would also receive the support of the archbishop, a grant made less surprising by the knowledge that the archbishop himself would eventually come to support the Hussite cause. Despite all of these warrants of safety, Huss presciently settled his affairs before he left Prague, even seeing to the disposal of his worldly goods should he fail to return. He made it clear in his writings that he did not expect to return from Constance. Nonetheless, after obtaining the aforementioned documents, he set forth with a contingency for Constance, and on

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<sup>67</sup> Gillett, i, 355. Gillett here cites Van der Hardt, iv. 12.

November 3, 1414, the Bohemians arrived for the council.

With the various players assembled, the council was finally opened on November 5, 1414. The daily activities of the council, though entertaining,<sup>68</sup> are not nearly so important as its overall results for the purpose of this inquiry. Nevertheless, some of the chronology of the council does need to be dealt with. At the meeting of the second session of the council, on March 22, 1415, John XXIII declared that if by so doing the schism would be ended, he would abdicate. When this was put to the test, however, he left the city in the night and in "disguise."<sup>69</sup> The council continued in similar fashion from session to session, justifying its existence, calling upon the certification of the emperor, and condemning the various actions of John and the other two papal claimants. In the sixth session, movement began to actually depose John. Additionally, the first steps were taken against Jerome of Prague.

Behind the scenes, meanwhile, Hus had for a time enjoyed something of a calm before the storm. On his arrival in Constance, the knights who had accompanied him went before John and sought to certify whether the writ of safe passage would be observed. They were assured by the pope that Hus' safety was sacrosanct. Hus took up residence in a private home and entertained many visitors there, holding daily mass and discussing matters of theology, as well as the affairs of the council. The ban of

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<sup>68</sup> For example, the usual reading, as a part of the opening of the council, of the first canon of the eleventh council of Toledo, which forbids, among other things the telling of idle stories or jokes. With this crowd, idle stories or jokes might have been an improvement.

<sup>69</sup> Landon here suggests that he left Constance in "a postilion's dress" -- that being the garb worn by the rider of the left member of either the lead or the only pair of horses pulling a carriage. The twelfth session of the council in deposing him, said, among other things, that he had left "secretly, and at a suspicious hour of the night, in *disguised and indecent dress*" (italics mine). The choice of words here, on the part of the council would seem somewhat excessive for simply dressing in the garb of a liveryman. Landon, i, 175 ; Tanner, i, 417.

excommunication was lifted while he was in Constance, not so much for his sake but so that the commerce of the city might not be disturbed.

As soon as his enemies from Prague arrived, they set about trying to reduce the relative freedom of association which he was enjoying. It was unquestionably their ultimate goal to seek his arrest. They caused some formal accusations to be drawn up against Hus, some of which were true, and some which were, from more advanced standards, just obviously false. Among the more colorful accusations against him was that he was a magician who could read the minds of any who came near him and that he made that knowledge public.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, John himself had used the case against Hus as a means of trying to divert attention from his own problems with the council.

On November 28, Hus was summoned before a meeting of cardinals to address some of the charges against him. Hus, either in naïve simplicity or in the stolidity of one expecting martyrdom, went to face them. After being questioned and despite the imperial guarantee of safe passage, Hus was detained. On December 6, 1414, Hus was delivered to the dungeon of a Dominican monastery on the Rhine. The cell into which he was placed was apparently of a particularly unpleasant nature. Gillett states that through it flowed into Lake Constance “every sort of impurity.”<sup>71</sup>

Here Hus would remain until three days after John XXIII's flight from Constance. The remaining supporters of Hus begged the Emperor, who by this time was in Constance, to intervene. Sigismund vacillated, and although he allowed Hus' supporters

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<sup>70</sup> Gillett, i, 335.

<sup>71</sup> Gillett, i, 350.

to visit him, he ultimately gave charge of the prisoner to the Cardinal of Constance, who had Hus moved to a tower at the castle of Gottlieben, where he was thrown into irons.<sup>72</sup> Hus would remain a prisoner throughout the process of his trials and until his execution. Pressed again and again, in language alternately reprovatory and plaintive, to recant, Hus would not. Accused on the one hand of things of which he simply was not guilty and on the other of things which he felt were not only not crimes, but indeed that which was commanded by God, Hus, like Luther a century later, refused to recant. But these earlier times were different. The papal schism had both emboldened the councils and at the same time made them more reactive to rebellion. And unlike Luther, Hus did not have the national shame of the death of a reformer, and the failure of an emperor to honor his own pledge of good faith to spur the shame of the assembled judges.

On the fourth of May 1415, the council declared heretical and condemned the writings and teachings of John Wycliffe and ordered that his bones be exhumed and scattered. On the twenty-ninth of that same month, the council deposed John XXIII, and made way for the election of a replacement, declaring all three of the former claimants invalid for election. On the fifteenth of June, the council condemned utraquism, or the taking of communion under both forms, which had been practiced by a number of the Bohemians.<sup>73</sup> It further threatened excommunication for any priest so administering the

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<sup>72</sup> John Huss, *The Letter of John Hus*, Matthew Spinka, trans. (Totowa, N. J.: Rowman and Littlefield 1972.), 155.; Spinka, *Concept*, 355-6; Gillett, i, 467. He did at least feed Hus, which was an improvement. Gillett says that those who brought him out of the Franciscan convent where he had been moved found a skeletal visage of a man, begging for sustenance. Gillett suggests that Hus hadn't been fed since the flight of the pope three days earlier. This is further supported by Hus' own writings, from his cell, in a letter to John of Chlum on 24 March 1415, in which Hus expresses the fear that with the pope having fled, he will starve.

<sup>73</sup> The practice takes its name from the Latin phrase *Sub Utraque Specie* which means simply "under both kinds."

Eucharist. On the sixth of July, 1415, the council engaged in a second condemnation of the writings of John Wycliffe. This was aimed wholly at Jan Hus and was tailored to his condemnation. The council then proceeded to pass sentence against Jan Hus, condemning his words, his teachings, his writings, and wholly and officially degrading him. It declared him to be an irredeemable heretic, impossible even for God to reclaim. Finally, the council sentenced Hus to the stake, at the hands of the secular authorities. He perished in flames that same day.

## THE PROBLEM OF PRIMARY SOURCES

In many such investigations, given the subject at hand, specifically opinions and materials which at the time were being labeled as heretical and were therefore being suppressed, and given the relative obscurity of the language involved, the problem facing the researcher is one of a lack of primary source material. Such unfortunately is the case in an investigation of the events of the life and death of Jan Hus, and the events surrounding the movement which followed his death and took his name.

Early records concerning Hus himself are essentially non-existent before he reached Prague and achieved status as a student at the university there. The later records are sketchy at best, often providing only the most official glimpses of Hus. Many church records from the time do survive, as does much of the body of Hus' writings and a number of his personal and public letters. Additionally, the records of the two councils in which Hus played a role survive, as do a number of the communications between various members of the clergy involved in the whole brouhaha.

The availability of the aforementioned materials might well cause one to conclude that the subject is well represented. However, on a closer examination of Hus' life, it quickly becomes apparent that a number of records and materials which might have played a crucial role in further determining the motivations of both Hus himself and those who opposed him have been lost to time. Some of these losses have occurred simply due to the whims of fortune. Others, however, may well have been suppressed by the church, in an attempt to end as much of the post-martyrdom influence of Hus as possible. What is clear from statements made by involved parties at the time is that an

attempt was made on the part of church officials to suppress *at the very least* Hus' writings, and the copies of his sermons which were circulated amongst the Bohemian Brethren.

In that regard too, a danger exists, though on what would seem to be a lesser scale. It has been suggested that some of the writings of Hus which survive do so in what may be a modified form, given the manner in which they were passed from person to person during the Bohemian rebellion of the fifteenth century. While this is certainly possible, it seems unlikely, given the missionary fervor with which both the Utraquists and the Taborites approached their subject and given the reverence in which they held the Bohemian reformer. The danger of this having real impact is also lessened by the fact that copies of the works in question were circulated well outside the sphere of Bohemian and German influence and that multiple copies of the works in question exist, allowing for comparison to evaluate potential alterations.

Perhaps the greatest destruction of historical records from this period came at the hands of the Austrians, who seized absolute control of Bohemia in 1620. At this time they sought to destroy virtually all records which involved Bohemian nationalism. Further, they are reputed to have taken specific measures to eradicate records from the time of the Bohemian Reformation and the Hussite wars.

Of nearly as great an impact, in the long run, has been a much simpler and more direct problem. For the vast majority of the time in which this material has been subject to examination, only that material which was presented by the church was even given attention. This was due both to the supposition, reinforced by church authorities, that

they presented a balanced view of Hus, and that review of other materials in coming to a point of judgment concerning the Bohemian reformation was unnecessary. Accepting this supposition was quite a boon for most researchers into the reformation, primarily because it saved them the difficulty of trying to make their way through materials written in the Czech language. Since most of the "official" publications of Hus were in Latin, as were the documents arising from the meetings of the councils, it was a fortuitous conclusion that those documents contained, if not the whole story, enough of the story to allow an informed opinion to be arrived at. In many cases, as will be seen in the examination of secondary sources, this trend was exacerbated by a tendency on the part of some of these researchers to enter the fray with preconceived notions which the dearth of material in a language which was accessible to them did nothing to lessen.

In the long run, it can be at the very least suggested, if not stated as a tautology that the combination of records which were both reduced in number and geographically scattered by the actions of the church and various political and national conflicts, as well as being rendered less-than-wholly accessible by the relative obscurity of the language in which many of them were written, played an astounding role in preventing the presentation of an unbiased view of the events surrounding the life and death of Hus. As has been hinted at, however, there are other elements which have played a contributory role in the obfuscation of a more clear picture of those events. The heart and soul of the inquiry at hand must involve an examination of the secondary source material surrounding the early reformation and those researchers who assembled them.



## REGIONAL AND RELIGIOUS BIASES IN SECONDARY SOURCES

Having established at least on a cursory basis the nature and person of Jan Hus and having examined the problems associated with primary source material concerning the life of Hus, the daunting task of examining Hus as portrayed through secondary sources comes to the fore. In many ways, the task is simply one of examining the approaches taken by various writers. It also includes examining the tendency of those writers to fall within differing identifiable categories based on the particular biases which they bring to their subject.

Here it should be understood that except in the most extreme of cases the term bias, despite its cultural baggage, should not be immediately interpreted as a pejorative, but rather an acknowledgment that virtually any subject is approached by its author from a particular perspective or mindset. Within the whole of the body of works on a particular subject, however, are those works in which the writer has either obviously intentionally inserted erroneous material, or intentionally refrained from the insertion of positive or negative material which would somehow harm his or her thesis. While an examination of bias within a particular body of works must attempt to be mindful of all levels and leanings of an author's preconceptions, it is this latter category of which it is most crucial to be aware.

The elements of bias inherent in the secondary sources concerning the life of Jan Hus tend to fall into five general categories, which will be listed here, then examined individually. These include: 1) those works which see Hus simply as a heretic, either

wholly of his own accord or as a Wycliffite adherent, who was necessarily suppressed by the church; 2) those who see Hus as little more than a Wycliffite plagiarist; 3) those which see Hus as a wholly original thinker; 4) those which consider both Hus and the Bohemian uprising of the fifteenth century as wholly insignificant; and finally 5) those which wish to find in the Bohemian Reformation<sup>74</sup> a proto-proletariat uprising against the nobility. Within each of these, there are, of course, sub-categories and divisions of consideration, which will be further examined as a part of the inquiry into each individual element.

The first of these general divisions of biased approach to the subject is that class of works which regards Hus simply as a heretic, justifiably punished, if not for the salvation of his own soul, then for the good of the larger body of believers. Not surprisingly, these tend to be Roman Catholic writers, and have lessened in numbers after the beginning of the twentieth century. The writings of the nineteenth century and before, however are replete with examples of this variety. While many of them are overt, and thus easy enough to dismiss, some large number of them are at first glance a great deal more subtle, and therefore appear to be more reasonable. Prime examples of this type of publication are *The Glories and Triumphs of the Catholic Church*<sup>75</sup> and Charles Poulet's *Church History*.<sup>76</sup> The former of these two is, not surprisingly, somewhat more willing to consign Hus to the pyre. Here Hus is simply paired with Wycliffe, with the notation that the two supposedly shared the view that "temporal princes should cut off the head of any

<sup>74</sup> For Reformation, here read Revolution.

<sup>75</sup> Anonymous. *The Glories and Triumphs of the Catholic Church*. (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1906)

<sup>76</sup> Dom Charles Poulet. *A History of the Catholic Church*, in 2 vols. trans. Sidney Raemers. (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1935)

ecclesiastic who sinned,"<sup>77</sup> a view which Hus may indeed have appreciated in the privacy of his own thoughts, but for which there is little supporting evidence as a public declaration of his beliefs. Certainly Hus taught that a cleric in sin was an unworthy representative of both God and the church but he likely would have balked at the idea of beheading. Indeed, he wrote while in jail at Constance that an evil priest, if his intent was right regarding the sacrament, was capable of acting as an instrument of transubstantiation, owing to the idea that it was God, and not the priest, who performed the miracle.<sup>78</sup> This hardly seems to jibe with the idea that an unworthy priest should be executed. In presenting this broad picture of the association of Hus with some of the more radical Wycliffite ideals, the author of the work provides aid and comfort to those who might hold to the notion that Hus was righteously dealt with at Constance.

Poulet, in his *Church History* is a great deal more even-handed, if no less dismissive. He tends to give the teachings of the early reformers little weight and refers to their beliefs as "errors." He also, like many writers before him, unfalteringly pairs Hus with Wycliffe, thus strengthening the idea that Hus' teachings, like those of Wycliffe before him, were irreconcilably heterodox. This is a view which a number of the post-contemporary observers of Hus, even from within the confines of the church, have refuted.

More recent Catholic writers have increasingly softened their tendency to justify the forced incandescence of Hus at Constance. This is particularly true of those

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<sup>77</sup> *Glories and Triumphs*, 469

<sup>78</sup> Matthew Spinka, *John Hus and the Czech Reform*. (Hamden: Archon Books, 1966), 57. It is also notable here that Hus very directly supports the doctrine of transubstantiation.

individuals writing in the post-Vatican II era of limited Catholic-Protestant reconciliation. The tendency to classify Hus as a transmitter of Wycliffite teaching has been, to some extent, displaced by a tendency either to dismiss Hus as an annoying heterodox stepping-stone to the Lutheran split, or to classify Hus more as the leader of a Bohemian nationalist movement than as an ecclesiastical reformer. Into this category falls the short work by Christopher Dawson, *The Dividing of Christendom*, in which Dawson first simply consigns Hus and Wycliffe into the same category, as “national heretics” and then goes on to say that the Hussite movement was to “defy the crusading efforts of the rest of Christendom for seventeen years.”<sup>79</sup> To his credit, however, Dawson does go on to explore slightly further the Hussite movement, even pointing out that Hus differed from Wycliffe in his acceptance of the Doctrine of the Real Presence.<sup>80</sup> Still another, more temperate group, while representing Hus as a reformer, finds in Hus the victim of an attempt by the Council of Constance to prove its own orthodoxy by the exposure and punishment of heresy, at a time when they stood in opposition to the three papal claimants, all of whom sought rightful acknowledgment as pope. J. Derek Holmes and Bernard Bickers’ *A Short History of the Catholic Church* seems to fall best into this latter category.<sup>81</sup>

Among those writers who identify themselves as Catholic apologists, the more recent writers provide the best hope for an eventual victory of fact over dogma. If current trends continue, it may well occur that Hus historians find themselves with less to

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<sup>79</sup> Christopher Dawson, *The Dividing of Christendom*, (Garden City: Image Books, 1967), 31, 34.

<sup>80</sup> Dawson, *Dividing*, 38.

<sup>81</sup> J. Derek Holmes and Bernard W. Bickers. *A short History of the Catholic Church*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1984.)

complain about from religiously induced bias than from that with roots in ethnic and national differences.

It is to some extent from those very roots that the next category in line for examination springs. This is that body of research which seeks to find in Hus little more than a follower of Wycliffe. These sources range in strength of opinion from those observers who see Hus as a student of Wycliffite teachings to those who would ascribe to him the guilt of outright plagiarism. The former are, fortunately, more prevalent.

Parochial preconceptions aside, it is little surprise that a number of those who would maximize the impact of Wycliffe's writings on the teachings and writings of Hus are English. Reginald Lane Poole, in his *Wycliffe and Movements for Reform* is a stellar example of the spirit expressed by many of this crowd. He entitles one of his chapters "Lollardy in England and Bohemia" and advocates that, by the very fact that they are both reformers and have been exposed to the teachings of Wycliffe, the Bohemian reformers are by necessity Lollards.<sup>82</sup> Though they were certainly kindred spirits to their English brethren, as the correspondence of Hus will attest, it seems that the Bohemians would likely have been surprised to hear themselves referred to as Lollards. It is worth noting that Poole was by his own admission intellectually indebted to the Wycliffe historian Loserth, who shall be discussed shortly.

Poole, like a number of other writers also subsumes Hus into the role of mere Wycliffe acolyte even more directly. In his chapter entitled "John Hus", he says of Hus

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<sup>82</sup> Reginald Lane Poole, *Wycliffe and Movements for Reform*. (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph and Company, 1889)

"He respected his English master."<sup>83</sup> Eustace J. Kitts, in writing his *Pope John the Twenty-third and Master John Hus of Bohemia* calls Wycliffe Hus' "spiritual master,"<sup>84</sup> while A. S. Turberville, in *Medieval Heresy and the Inquisition*, is even more direct, saying that "The opinions of the great Bohemian leader were not original... he was led by the influence of the doctrines of Wycliffe"<sup>85</sup> and later "His 'De Ecclesia' is little more than a translation of Wycliffe. On the whole he remained distinctly more orthodox than his master." It is noteworthy, however, that Turberville acknowledges his own indebtedness to both Poole and Loserth in writing his section on Hus and the Bohemians. It is easy to see the influence of his sources here. This is echoed virtually word for word by Margaret Deansly: "Hus . . . borrowed from Wycliffe very closely in his writings. His *De Ecclesia* is little more than a translation of Wycliffe."<sup>86</sup> Clearly there is a general opinion among some scholars that Hus was at least a flatterer of Wycliffe, if not an outright plagiarist. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the writings of the Wycliffe scholar, Johann Loserth.

The stance taken by Loserth in attacking Hus is intriguing for a number of reasons. Foremost of these is that his claims have some merit.<sup>87</sup> Structurally, there is significant correlation between the writings of Hus and those of his predecessor,

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<sup>83</sup> Poole, 152.

<sup>84</sup> Eustace J. Kitts. *Pope John the Twenty-third and Master John Hus of Bohemia*. (London: Constable and Company Limited, 1910)

<sup>85</sup> A. S. Turberville. *Medieval Heresy and the Inquisition*. (London: Archon Books, 1964.) 95.

<sup>86</sup> Margaret Deansly. *A History of the Medieval Church 590-1500*. Ninth Edition (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1969) In fairness to Deansly, there are relatively few ways for one to express the opinion that Hus copied Wycliffe in the writing of *De Ecclesia*. Deansly's original work was completed in 1925, before Turberville wrote his treatise.

<sup>87</sup> Johann Loserth. *Wyclif and Hus*. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1884) For a more complete introduction to the structural parallels between the writings of Wyclif and those of Hus, see Loserth 192-279.

Wycliffe. Loserth, however asserts almost total duplication where a much more limited amount exists. Loserth would convince his reader that Hus had virtually no original thought, but simply repeated, parrot-like, every word which flowed from the pen of Wycliffe. This is simply not so and is borne out even by Hus' own testimony at Constance on June 7, 1415.<sup>88</sup> Hus repeatedly defended the doctrine of transubstantiation, which Wycliffe, as an ultrarealist, had specifically and consistently rejected.

Loserth carries his attack on the Bohemian reformation still further. Not only does he ascribe all of Hus' thinking to Wycliffe, but he assigns responsibility for the entire movement to the English reformer. He refers to the beginnings of the movement as "nothing else than pure Wiclifism"<sup>89</sup> citing as evidence the writing of one Ludoph of Sagan, who said "the terrible deeds, repugnant to the faith, to truth and equity, justice, religion and Church, took their start from the books of Wiclif."<sup>90</sup> Even to a casual observer, the transparency of the flaws in this support should be apparent. Here Loserth uses the writings of a Hus detractor, who himself uses a charge of Wycliffism primarily as an attack on both Hus and the Bohemian movement as a means of establishing Wycliffian descent within the Bohemian reformation.

Loserth is unwilling to stop at that, however. He also feels compelled to denounce Wenzel for his role in these affairs and in so doing seems to give unique insight into some of the sentiments which underlie the rest of his writings. Wenzel, says Loserth,

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<sup>88</sup> Gillett, 554-7. Hus, when faced with the incompatibility of realist philosophy with transubstantiation allowed that due to the miraculous nature of the event in question, such a material conversion might be possible despite its physical contradictions.

<sup>89</sup> Loserth, *Wyclif and Hus*, 76.

<sup>90</sup> Loserth, *Wyclif and Hus*, 76.

avored, if he did not outright sponsor heresy, which “was with the Germans so much more odious, inasmuch as it displayed a rooted opposition to all that was German.”<sup>91</sup>

Here, unfortunately, Loserth leaves the reader with an intellectual conundrum. He seems to be suggesting that the very act of supporting “heretical” thought was outside the realm of possibility for anyone of German heritage, something of a problem when one considers the elements present in the Lutheran reformation of a century later.

Throughout the entirety of the work, Loserth continues in like manner, alternately condemning the elements of the Bohemian movement for unbridled Wycliffism and for their unwillingness to accept the redeeming wisdom of their German betters. It would appear to be no accident that the vast majority of his sources, both those contemporary to Hus and those later commentators, are German. Loserth’s writing is nothing if not nationalistically German. This, however, is somewhat more understandable, when taken in light of the fact that this was written in late nineteenth-century Germany, at a time when German nationalism was at high levels.

It should not, however, be inferred by this excursion into the tendencies of Loserth that he was the only writer to have displayed nationalist leanings. Another readily accessible example, if on a greatly lessened scale, is Kurt Reinhardt’s *Germany: 2000 Years*. Reinhardt, while not as directly Germanocentric as Loserth, makes up for his failings in this area by simply misleading his audience through his presentation of facts. In his somewhat understated address of Hus and the Hussite wars, Reinhardt, like Loserth, ascribes Hus’ theology wholly to Wycliffe but adds a fresh twist. After

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<sup>91</sup> Loserth, *Wyclif and Hus*, 88.



overstating the Wycliffite influence on Hus, he then takes considerable effort to describe Wycliffe's rejection of transubstantiation and moves forward without pointing out that Hus did not subscribe to that portion of the Wycliffian realist philosophical view, thus leaving the uninformed reader to assume that this was simply another of Hus' heretical stances.<sup>92</sup>

Having addressed that group of historians who have portrayed Hus as nothing more than a mouthpiece for Wycliffe, it is only fair to deal with that group of historians who would choose to see Hus as a theological Minerva, having sprung fully grown from the head of Zeus<sup>93</sup> already spouting reform and predestination. It comes as little surprise that many of these wholesale Hus apologists are Czech. Foremost among these is the venerable Czech historian, Count von Lützow, and close behind, the more recent, if no less prolific, Matthew Spinka.

Lützow, of all the literary supporters of Hus, is at least the most unabashed. In the preface to his somewhat extensive *Life and Times of Master John Hus*,<sup>94</sup> he states openly "I write as a fervent admirer of Hus, both as an enthusiastic Bohemian patriot, and as a fervent and pious Christian."<sup>95</sup> A few lines later, he adds, to his credit, "The very fact that my sympathy is entirely with Hus has, I hope, been to me an inducement to sift carefully all reliable evidence that may be contrary to him, and to study diligently the writings of all those who have written unfavourably of Hus."<sup>96</sup> It is obvious in reading the

<sup>92</sup> Kurt Reinhardt, *Germany: 2000 Years* (New York: Continuum, 1991) 176-178.

<sup>93</sup> Or perhaps, in this case, from the head of Augustine.

<sup>94</sup> Count Lützow, *The Life and Times of Master John Huss* (London: J. M. Dent & Co. 1909), v.

<sup>95</sup> Lützow, *Life and Times*, v.

<sup>96</sup> Lützow, *Life and Times*, v.

work which follows those words that Lützow strove to make good his intended impartiality. It is also clear that his affection for Hus played a role in the final outcome of that attempt. It is from Lützow that the tale of a young Hus sticking his hand into a fire to test the level of his piety comes.<sup>97</sup> Lützow is nearly wholesale in his canonization of Hus. He is, however, occasionally more even handed than others, where those who opposed Hus are concerned. Where Gillett would have his readers believe without mitigation that Cossa, later John XXIII was a pirate as a youth, it is from Lützow that the researcher finds confirmation of the idea that this likely means simply that he took part in naval warfare of the time.<sup>98</sup> Elsewhere, however, Cossa is treated with blistering condemnation. On several occasions, Lützow refers to Cossa as the *diavolo cardinale*, or “devil’s cardinal.”<sup>99</sup>

Throughout his work, Lützow expresses a generally subtle, if pervasive anti-German sentiment. In retelling the nature of the Germanic influence on the university of Prague, he is less than kind to the non-Bohemian elements involved. When he describes the stationing of troops in Bohemia by the emperor Rupert, after the deposition of Wenzel as leader of the Holy Roman Empire, he describes it as a German “invasion,” which in truth, it may have been, but hardly a choice of words inclined toward extreme even-handedness.<sup>100</sup> This in itself raises the question of what level of polemical statement is to be regarded as legitimate, and where such statements cross over into noteworthy bias. Certainly the German nations have invaded Bohemia, as well as several of their

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<sup>97</sup> Lützow, *Life and Times*, 70.

<sup>98</sup> Lützow, *Life and Times*, 96.

<sup>99</sup> Lützow, *Life and Times*, 97, 181, 214, 231, just to list four.

<sup>100</sup> Lützow, *Life and Times*, 101.

other neighbors, on a number of occasions. But there would seem to be a legitimate question as to whether this instance qualifies as such, with the “invasion” coming from the leader of a group which Bohemia did belong to at the time, the Holy Roman Empire.

Lützow’s companion work, *The Hussite Wars*, is likewise unabashed in its admiration for the Bohemian reformation and its leaders. It is also just as harsh on Bohemia’s more incursionary German neighbors, and the church. But Lützow is far from alone in his tendency toward expressing Bohemian patriotism and nationalism in his writings, nor is he alone in his affection for Hus.

In more recent years, a number of Hus biographers and Hussitologists have come to the fore. Some of these include Roubiczek and Palmer, whose *Warrior of God* represents not sound intellectual exercise, but true intellectual bravery. The authors in question remained in Czechoslovakia until apparently mere days before the German invasion, and lost their notes in the process, depending for publication on a manuscript which had previously been mailed to England. Also notable is Otakar Odložilík, whose *The Hussite King* is a superb work concerning the years after the thirty-years war.<sup>101</sup> But of the more recent authors concerning Jan Hus and the movement bearing his name, none shine so brightly as Matthew Spinka, and indeed, none take such a vigorous pro-Czech and pro-Bohemian stance.

If Johann Loserth has a polar opposite, it would be Matthew Spinka. Indeed, Loserth would seem, by extreme antithetical example, to have been one of Spinka’s inspirations. Within the first few pages of Spinka’s *John Hus’ Concept of the Church*, he

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<sup>101</sup> Otakar Odložilík, *The Hussite King* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1965)

complains about “the warped and biased judgments of such men as Johann Loserth.”<sup>102</sup>

In many ways, this book stands as a defense of Hus against Loserth’s assertions of Hus’ outright plagiarism of Wycliffe’s writings, particularly of his *De Ecclesia*. Spinka assembles a considerable body of evidence, much of which comes from sources which are actually hostile to Hus, but which are unwilling to follow Loserth lockstep in his condemnation of the man.

In his stance against some of the weak scholarship committed by Loserth<sup>103</sup> and others, Spinka quite predictably falls into some pitfalls. The first is his unmitigated support for Hus, which occasionally leaves the realm of the reasonable and becomes simple hero-worship. Another is moving Loserth from the position of Wycliffe apologist and questionable researcher into that of the villain. Spinka gives evidence of taking Loserth’s attacks on Hus personally, and in so doing periodically loses the focus of his subject matter. When these two tendencies combine, unfortunately, Spinka makes the more grievous mistake of ignoring those areas in which Loserth may actually have valid points to make. In his examination of parallels between the writings of Hus and those of Wycliffe, for example, Loserth goes too far in suggesting that the *De Ecclesia* of the former was copied wholesale from that of the latter. His broader point, however, that *some* of Hus’ writings do indeed owe direct lineage to those of Wycliffe is unquestionably true. Spinka often ignores that truth which is buried within Loserth’s research, apparently out of personal distaste for Loserth’s more specific foibles.

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<sup>102</sup> Spinka, *John Hus’ Concept of the Church*, 4.

<sup>103</sup> In an attempt to give Loserth all benefit of doubt, a significant amount of material related to and including the writings of Hus were made accessible to researchers after his death. This does not, however, excuse the viciousness of tone which some of his anti-Hus statements took.

Moreover, this occasionally forces Spinka into the untenable position of finding support for weak theses. Fortunately this does not occur often and is balanced at least slightly by areas in which he does acknowledge at least a modicum of Wycliffian ancestry in some of Hus' writings, as in his reluctant admission that Hus' treatise *Concerning Simony* owes eighteen of its pages word for word to the work by the same name by Wycliffe.<sup>104</sup>

These complaints notwithstanding, Spinka is a remarkable researcher. He benefits from those upon whose shoulders he stands, including occasionally Loserth,<sup>105</sup> but he brings to the arena of Hus research both energy and some truly original interpretations of the available data. He also brings to the fray accessibility to a body of writings by Czech researchers which were previously unavailable, either due to barriers of language or by virtue of the fact that they simply did not exist at the time in which their works were written.

It should be noted here that there are a number of more recent historians, many of them Czech, who have admirably taken up the mantle of Hussitology and who are, to a much greater extent than their forebears in the field, inclined to remove the whitewash from the study of Hus and view the reformer in an unvarnished manner. Many of these, it might be pointed out, are intellectually descended either directly or secondarily from the writers who preceded them. John Martin Klassen, who has added a truly fascinating element to the larger body of Hussitology with his *The Nobility and the Making of the Hussite Revolution*<sup>106</sup> is a student of Howard Kaminsky, a noted researcher on the subject

<sup>104</sup> Matthew Spinka, *(John Hus and the Czech Reform)*, Hamden: Archon Books, 1966, 17.

<sup>105</sup> Though far more often from the writings of those who have refuted Loserth.

<sup>106</sup> John Martin Klassen, *The Nobility and the Making of the Hussite Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978) Note: this work originally appeared as a part of the *East European Quarterly*.

who has written, amongst others, the voluminous and superb *History of the Hussite Revolution*. Kaminsky, in his own turn, acknowledges Josef Macek, then director of the Czechoslovakian Academy of Sciences in Prague and a commentator on Hussite theology, to whom Spinka also refers, as having been a great source of his aid. Macek himself represents yet another school of Hussite historiography, that of the Marxist school of history.

With the rise of Marxism as one of the dominant political, philosophical, economic, and social movements in Eastern Europe came a natural extension of that philosophical stance into many various fields of study. The inevitability of its incursion into the study of history was nearly predestined by the exclusionary nature of much of the Classical and Whig historiographical research which had gone before. With its inherent interest in what were interpreted as theretofore socially disenfranchised classes of people, it presented an opportunity to examine vast elements of history afresh.<sup>107</sup> Marxist historiography brought with it a bright-eyed willingness to look at the plight of the common man and to try to find the place of the poor and the middle class, in a field which, because of their underrepresentation within the public documents on which so much history had been based, had largely ignored them. Unfortunately, it also brought a tendency to see virtually all of history's more conflictory elements as either oppression of the masses by the evil capitalists or as righteous uprisings by the proletariat masses against the evil capitalists who *had* oppressed them. Over-extension of this rather

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<sup>107</sup> Providing fodder for countless wordy, tedious and boring research papers.

limiting world view, however, tarnished a number of works arising from this school, many of which exhibited otherwise quite stellar scholarship.

A number of notable authors stand out as examples of the Marxist school of Hussite and early reformation historiography, including Milan Machovec, Robert Kalivoda, and the previously mentioned Josef Macek. While the Marxist researchers into later reformation events focused largely on the “peasants revolution” of the sixteenth century, many of the adherents of this school of historiography, when dealing with events in Bohemia in the fifteenth century focused on the semi-communal nature of the groups which formed in Prague and Tabor during the Hussite reformation. There are also those historians, such as Kaminsky, who though not overtly demonstrative of the Marxist school, represent a body of researchers who have been influenced by Marxist historians.

Showing similar tendencies is John Klassen<sup>108</sup>, a student of Kaminsky, whose previously mentioned work *The Nobility and the Making of the Hussite Revolution* delves fully into the social and economic backgrounds of the Hussite uprising. Klassen says of the pre-Hussite Bohemian peasants that they “easily identified themselves as the good people, because they lived simply, and the wealthy as the evildoers because they lived opulently at the poor’s expense.”<sup>109</sup> This is a theme which Klassen maintains throughout the work, occasionally standing in direct opposition to previous Hussologists, who have seen the Hussite reformation not primarily as a social uprising based on fiscal or temporal inequities but on more distinctly theological bases. Even more unfortunately,

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<sup>108</sup> Klassen says of his old professor “...Howard Kaminsky, whose work is more difficult to place into an ideological category” *Nobility*, 41. Klassen learned well from his teacher. Klassen spends considerable time quoting members of the socialist-Marxist school while disguising his own ideological leanings relatively well.

<sup>109</sup> Klassen, *Nobility*, 5.

Klassen suggests that Hus himself was a proponent of social uprising on the basis of temporal inequity, a position which he supports by pointing out that one of Hus' most outspoken detractors at Constance, John Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris, said so.<sup>110</sup>

A number of other works stand out as examples of both the positive and negative aspects of the socialist-Marxist school of early reformation historiography, including the notable essay entitled "The Hussite Movement" contained in the volume *Bohemia in History*.<sup>111</sup>

There is a final sub-category which a number of secondary sources concerning the reformation in general and the early reformation in particular fall into and which this work will examine. That category is those documents which either mention Hus and his followers and dismiss them as inconsequential to the issue of the reformation overall, simply lump Hus and the Hussites quickly in with Wycliffe and the Lollards and move on or worse, those sources which omit the Hussite movement altogether. This is, all things considered, the most frustrating category for researchers into the early reformation. It is also unfortunately, the category which most American students receive the most exposure to, as shall be seen in the exploration of survey texts which is to follow.

Regrettably, there is no dearth of exemplary material to represent this group of sources. It should be remembered that what is being addressed here are not the

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<sup>110</sup> Klassen, *Nobility*, 64. Here Klassen presents what appears to be a falsehood compounded by an error. Gerson falsely accused Hus of promoting social uprising, tarring him more fully than he deserved with a Wycliffite brush, a falsehood upon which Klassen here bases his argument.

<sup>111</sup> Frantisek Smahel, "The Hussite Movement: an anomaly of European History?" in *Bohemia in History*, Mikuláš Teich, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 79-97.



encompassing history texts which will be examined in the next chapter, but instead texts which are intended to deal either specifically with the early reformation, or with the broader reformation era as a whole.

The small book entitled *The Reformation Crisis* is one of that group which fleetingly and dismissively categorizes Hus with Wycliffe and moves on before the student has time to ask any difficult questions.<sup>112</sup> Both the Lollard and the Hussite movements are given a total of nineteen lines of print, and are described as “homespun, provincial affairs,” which “did not spread.” Luther, in describing an event which occurred during his time as a monk would have disagreed. On two separate occasions when he was asked to write prefaces to collections of Hus’ writings, he recounted the story of how, during his younger years, he had picked up some works of Hus in a monastery library, and found them “to be powerful, and in accordance with the pure Word of God” and that he began to wonder “why the pope and the Council had burned such and so great a man.”<sup>113</sup>

Norman Sykes, in his *Crisis of the Reformation* is equally dismissive. He too binds Wycliffe and Hus inseparably together, but dismisses Hus within the space of eight lines. He does so with the comment that the connection between the Hussite movement and the reformation of the sixteenth century is “slight.”<sup>114</sup> Wycliffe is treated with somewhat more kindness, although not a great deal more.

<sup>112</sup> Dennis Hay, “The Background to the Reformation”, in *The Reformation Crisis*, ed. Joel Hurtsfield. (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 14-15.

<sup>113</sup> Spinka, *John Hus and the Czech Reform*, referencing “Vorrede Zu Confessio fidei ac religionis barorum ac nobilium regni Bohemiae, 1538.” in *Werke* (Weimar, 1914), L, 379-380.

<sup>114</sup> Norman Sykes, *The Crisis of the Reformation*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1938), 24.

Despite its title, Roland Bainton's work *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* is quite a bit more generous with the amount of actual space it gives to both Hus and the Hussites. Unfortunately, Bainton is plagued by questionable accuracy. In introducing the reader to Hus, he says that Hus shared the Wycliffite rejection of transubstantiation, a statement which is plainly untrue.<sup>115</sup> He further goes on to state that Luther eventually came to support some of Hus' teachings but implies that it was only grudgingly and with great difficulty, a position which has more limited validity than Bainton would lend it.<sup>116</sup> He does admirably point out the tendency of the Germans to reject Hus simply due to his having been Bohemian, however, and that is well to his credit, as is his admission of the influence of the Hussite doctrine of utraquism on the German reformers' adoption of the Eucharist in both forms.<sup>117</sup> *The Reformation* by George L. Mosse is less generous. Mosse, in introducing his section on Luther scantily mentions Hus, not surprisingly in the same breath as Wycliffe, and moves on. He later introduces the Anabaptists with the statement that the movement has roots in the Hussites of Bohemia. This sort of dismissive treatment has, by this point, come to be expected. What is unusual, however, is that in spite of giving the cause of Hus and the Hussite less than a full paragraph, Mosse is perfectly comfortable giving his readers a picture of Hus being burned at the stake, without actually having explained who the man was.<sup>118</sup>

Having looked at several works dedicated to the specific subject of the reformation, and having observed the manner in which, for better or worse, each of them

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<sup>115</sup> Roland Bainton, *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1952), 20.

<sup>116</sup> Bainton, *Reformation*, 23, 56.

<sup>117</sup> Bainton, *Reformation*, 57, 64.

<sup>118</sup> George L. Mosse, *The Reformation*, (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Wilson, Inc., 1953), 11, 37, 27.

treated the admittedly difficult subject of how to insert Jan Hus and the Bohemian insurgency into the broader scope of reformation history, it behooves the researcher to examine the ways in which their more expansive counterparts deal with the subject. As such, the next group of works to be investigated are those texts intended for use as the bases for broad, survey type coursework.

## THE DIFFICULTIES INHERENT IN SURVEY LITERATURE

Presenting the early reformation in texts designed for undergraduate level survey courses presents its own, wholly fresh set of difficulties for the academician, both from the perspective of the writer, and from the perspective of one seeking to enlighten students as to the nature of this particular period. Falling as it does on the cusp between the traditional limits of Medieval history and the study of the Reformation, it frequently gets short shrift from the texts covering both periods. The types of texts involved here tend to fall into two categories: that group of works intended to cover a specific period in history, such as the Renaissance and Reformation periods and the Medieval period, and that set of texts intended to cover the entire history of mankind in fifteen hundred pages or less. Given that these two types of books each presents unique problems, they will be dealt with separately.

Like some of their smaller counterparts, the larger texts dedicated to era-specific studies run into the thorny problem of the early reformers. Blessed with an abundance of room in which to make their point, however, the authors of these works are occasionally a tad more generous. Henry S. Lucas, for example, in his text *The Renaissance and the Reformation*, first nearly addresses Hus as a mere appendix to Wycliffe, but later broadens his treatment, calling Wycliffe a heretic, while labeling Hus a real herald of the reformation and correctly pointing out Hus' embrasure of the doctrine of the Real Presence, although he also makes the mistake of indicating that Sbynco, Archbishop of Prague and one of Hus' chief opponents, was nearly illiterate, a charge made by the

citizens of Prague at the time of the condemnation of Wycliffe's writings and one for which there is little other evidence.<sup>119</sup>

The venerable Norman Cantor, who quite legitimately sets as an upper range for exploration in his text *Medieval History* the year 1500 dedicates roughly a page to Wycliffe, and then proceeds to relegate Hus and the Bohemians to the space of several lines.<sup>120</sup> Robert Hoyt and Stanley Chodrow, in *Europe in the Middle Ages* give Hus and the Bohemians by comparison a much fuller treatment and unquestionably one of the more kind to be found in this textual context. After explaining the issue of the conciliar epoch, they give a somewhat perfunctory glance at Hus and his followers, but more importantly they fairly and accurately point out the degree to which the questioning of Hus by the Council of Constance was slanted in such a way as to make it impossible for him to answer without incriminating himself more fully than he was willing. Moreover, they also, as some others have, point out Hus' adherence to the doctrine of transubstantiation. All in all, despite its brevity, theirs is one of the more satisfying treatments of the martyrdom of Hus to be found in this type of text.<sup>121</sup>

Stewart C. Easton, in his book *The Heritage of the Past: Earliest Times to 1500* is relatively brief in his visitation of Hus and the Bohemians, giving the subject roughly two pages, in which he refers to John XXIII as "the notorious pirate-turned pope," perhaps a somewhat questionable choice of phrase, and generally supports Hus' cause, while

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<sup>119</sup> Henry S. Lucas, *The Renaissance and the Reformation*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1960) 102, 122-123.

<sup>120</sup> Norman Cantor, *Medieval History*, (London: Macmillan, 1963), 538-539.

<sup>121</sup> Robert S. Hoyt and Stanley Chodrow, *Europe in the Middle Ages*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 604-607.

refraining from overenthusiasm.<sup>122</sup> A text which suffers from no such restraint, by comparison, is Lewis W. Spitz's *The Renaissance and Reformation Movements*. Spitz gives Hus and the movement as a whole four pages of print, in which at times he acts very nearly as a Hus apologist. No description can serve to describe the nature of the text here as well as a direct quote, this from Spitz's description of Hus' execution:

On July 6 the council condemned him to death in the presence of Emperor Sigismund and committed his soul to the devil. Hus, a pale, thin wisp of a man, stood with uplifted eyes commending his soul to Christ. He was then delivered to the "secular arm," led to the place of execution, tied to a stake and burned. When the faggots were piled around him, he was called upon once again to recant, but he answered, "God is my witness that I have never taught or preached that which false witnesses have testified against me. He knows that the great object of all my preaching and writing was to convert men from sin. In the truth of that gospel which hitherto I have written, taught, and preached, I now joyfully die." As the flames licked his body, huge blisters formed under his skin. Before the smoke choked out his voice, he was heard to pray, "*Kyrie eleison*" -- Lord, have mercy!"<sup>123</sup>

While structurally completely accurate, the presentation here is not one of a type usually found in a text of this nature.<sup>124</sup>

The last era-specific survey text to be examined is Brian Tierney and Sidney Painter's *Western Europe in the Middle Ages 300-1475* which actually gives Wycliffe, Hus, and the Conciliar movement a quite impressive, and very evenly presented twelve pages. Their address of the period seems to be one of the better available, effectively maintaining the balance of presenting these situations and individuals in a compelling format, while not succumbing to the temptation to preach.<sup>125</sup> Of the relationship between

<sup>122</sup> Stewart C. Easton, *The Heritage of the Past: Earliest times to 1500*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, Inc., 1970), 613-616. Easton's enthusiastic choice of phrase at that particular juncture seems to run the risk of leaving the student with the mental image of a pope with an eye patch, a gold earring and a parrot on one shoulder. While he might indeed have been a man of questionable character, even Cossa does not deserve *that* imagery.

<sup>123</sup> Lewis W. Spitz, *The Renaissance and Reformation Movements*, (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1971), 35.

<sup>124</sup> Spitz, *Renaissance and Reformation*, 33-37.

<sup>125</sup> Brian Tierney and Sidney Painter, *Western Europe in the Middle Ages 300-1475*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970) 479-491.

Wycliffe and Hus, Tierney and Painter state that Hus “used the ideas he needed and apparently did not bother too much about the rest of Wycliffe’s teaching.”<sup>126</sup>

Having examined several period-specific survey texts, a review of some of the plethora of broad history texts is called for. These, understandably, generally afford even less room to the early reformers than their more focused counterparts. Even so, they vary somewhat in their treatment of the subject, and deserve individual attention correspondingly.

In *The Heritage of World Civilizations*, Albert M. Craig and his associates present what might otherwise have been a succinct and pithy description of the conciliar epoch, and of the Hussite reformation in specific. They make the mistake, however, of repeating the untruth that Hus denied transubstantiation and that he denied the validity of sacraments performed by priests who were not moral, an issue which has been thoroughly addressed elsewhere in this text.<sup>127</sup> It is just such repetitions of error which further ingrain misinformation into the overall body of knowledge.

While not making that particular mistake, *The Western Experience*, by Mortimer Chambers, *et al* makes mistakes all its own. This text, as have some others before it, groups Wycliffe and Hus together simply under the heading “Heresies” and suggests that Hus’ theology is difficult to understand, calling his ideas “less than clear” and saying that “it is hard to define how he departed from orthodoxy.”<sup>128</sup> A more reasonable examination

<sup>126</sup> Tierney and Painter, *Western Europe*, 482. Accurate, succinctly put, and a nice turn of phrase to boot.

<sup>127</sup> Albert M. Craig, William A. Graham, Donald Kagan, Steven Ozment, and Frank M. Turner, *The Heritage of World Civilizations*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (New York: Macmillan College Publishing Company Inc., 1994) 489.

<sup>128</sup> Mortimer Chambers, Raymond Grew, David Herlihy, Theodore Krabb, and Isser Woloch, *The Western Experience*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1991), 484-485.

*might* have concluded after examining Hus' "difficult" theology that if one could not find an area in which Hus departed from orthodoxy that he may well have been burned for even more illegitimate reasons than the ones stated. The authors even allude to this, suggesting that Hus was executed more for challenging the authority of the council than for his "doctrinal errors."<sup>129</sup>

Due to the nature of the subject matter being examined and the previously discussed problems of primary and secondary source material bias, a certain amount of "intellectual disagreement" concerning the events of the Bohemian reformation is to be expected. It might even be considered that it is those areas of contention which make this such an interesting area of research. What is not expected in reading materials written about the period, however, is a departure from simple historical fact. This is the problem found in *Civilizations in the West*, written by Mark Kishlansky, Patrick Geary, and Patricia O'Brien. While giving otherwise gratifying attention to Hus and his Bohemian brethren, the authors inform their readers that 1) King Wenceslas IV (Wenzel) "favored the German faction" and 2) that said king "expelled the Czech faculty from the university."<sup>130</sup> Both statements are simply historically untrue. As stated previously in this text, Wenzel, although vacillating with regard to the level of support he was willing to give the reformers *clearly* did not support the German faction in this argument and indeed took steps which drove the German faculty, not the Czech, from the University of Prague. This level of inaccuracy is simply beyond excusability.

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<sup>129</sup> Chambers, *et al.*, *Western Experience*, 485.

<sup>130</sup> Mark Kishlansky, Patrick Geary, and Patricia O'Brien, *Civilization in the West*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (New York: Longman, 1998), 329.



By comparison, the relatively common error of perhaps assigning too much Wycliffite influence to Hus, which is committed by Robert E. Lerner and his fellow writers in the text *Western Civilizations*, is a wholly forgivable one. The authors give the early reformation a relatively honest and even, if understandably brief, treatment. Overall, the approach taken in this text is a satisfying one and one which managed to get the heart of the matter across to its potential readers.<sup>131</sup>

The last text of this *genre* which will be examined is *Civilizations of the World*, by Richard Greaves, *et al.* The space which they lend to both Wycliffe and Hus is roughly half a page, into which they manage to squeeze several of the relevant facts. Unlike many of its type, the text does not overstate the influence of Wycliffe on Hus and does, surprisingly, address the likely twin methods by which Wycliffite teachings spread into Bohemia. If the text has a true failing, it is a weakness in examining the continuation of the movement following the death of its founder. The authors do write of the Bohemian rebellion lasting from 1421 to 1436, but then roughly one hundred pages later go on to mention the Hussites in the context of the Thirty-years War without providing any intellectual linking between the two foci. This would seem likely to leave most students far too easily confused as to the continuing nature of the movement in Bohemia during this time.<sup>132</sup>

Given the nature of the task presented to writers of these survey-based texts, it is understandable that some variance will occur in the presentation of such a limited

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<sup>131</sup> Robert E. Lerner, Standish Meacham, and Edward McNall Burns, *Western Civilizations*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed., (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), 394-395.

<sup>132</sup> Richard L. Greaves, Robert Zaller, Philip Cannistraro, and Rhoads Murphey, *Civilizations of the World*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), 326-327, 441.

moment in history as the Bohemian reformation, despite what researchers into the era would argue was its considerable effect on events in Europe which would follow. What is not expected from such texts and what must not be tolerated by means of financial support is the deviation from factual basis which has been demonstrated in some of the texts examined. How then should the academician approach this subject? What solutions exist, if any, to the problems which have been presented here. This will be the subject of the final section of this work, and the purpose of the investigations which have led to it.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This thesis has had, as the reader will certainly have noticed, two primary goals. Structurally, the first was to acquaint its audience with the person of Jan Hus and the movement which his teachings spawned. This was done to enlighten him or her with regard to a period in history which has, for a number of reasons, been far too underrepresented for far too long. It was thus necessary to provide at least a cursory biographical sketch, in as unbiased a manner as possible, given the weakness of some of the available research material, of just who Jan Hus was. This was also done so that the reader might be better able to grasp the levels, both subtle and gross, to which the various source materials surrounding this issue contributed to the previously mentioned underrepresentation and likewise a discernible level of misrepresentation, and the effects which they have, over the years, had on the manner in which the period has been treated.

Having presented, in as unvarnished a manner as possible, the life of Jan Hus, the direction of the work turned to its more specific focus, that of examining the various source material available, in an examination of the ways in which bias within those materials has affected and continues to affect research into the period and the people and events which define it. This section of the work rather naturally divided into two initial sections, they being the inquiry into primary source material, and that into the broader, but thornier issue of secondary sources. These two areas of inquiry were joined by a third, more academically oriented inquiry, into the unique problems presented with regard to the subject by currently available survey texts.

Performed strictly as an academic exercise, this inquiry would have been unquestionably valuable to the researcher, if for no other reason, as an opportunity to hone the types of skills necessary for a relatively broad piece of research concerning a rather narrow subject. However the subject bears with it considerably more practical gifts for the researcher, in providing knowledge about bias as a factor in general and in pointing out specific biases which are inherently and irrevocably mingled with this particular area of subject matter. The same can likely be said, to varying degrees, about any subject matter, in any era of historical research.

It behooves the researcher, then, having identified areas within his area of research, to find ways in which that information can be put to use in the betterment of his field, and in the broader area of historical research. The question must be asked: How can this material be put to practical use? What good may come, for example, from a recognition of weakness and bias within the body of primary and secondary source material concerning the early reformation? And further, how can this information be useful to, perhaps, a researchers into other areas of historical inquiry?

First and foremost, while recognizing the potential for weakness in primary source material, care must be taken to guard against unnecessary deconstruction. The waters of the past are far too often murky enough without that sort of further muddying. This should not be taken as an abjuration against careful investigation, but instead should be regarded as a cautionary remonstrance to have care when attempting to read too fully the mores and suppositions of the moment into materials presented by the past.

At the same time, where primary source material is scarce, particularly as in this case, where it is known that various groups contrived to destroy many of the pertinent records, the researcher must be more aware of the potential for one-sidedness in the availability of resource material. It has been said, and accurately, that history is written by the victor. In researching areas where the victor has been particularly effective in eradicating dissenting opinion, care must be taken not to make the mistake of simply reiterating old propaganda.

One of the most direct ways in which the researcher can make sure that this does not occur is to fully examine as many sides of an issue as possible. This bears the sound of a truism, and it may well be, however it is a fact that many historical researchers simply do not do so. This happens for reasons far too numerous to be fully explored in this very limited format. Among the reasons often cited include the time involved, the magnitude of the work demanded by such thoroughness, or the need for better language skills. None of these would seem to be wholly legitimate reasons for weak research. If the scope of the work involved in a particular piece of research is too large, that research can be refined, honed to a more manageable point.

Perhaps the most damaging of all of these, and yet one which is all too understandable is weakness of language skills. It behooves the researcher to be able to work within the languages surrounding the issue with which he or she is dealing. The area of early reformation historiography is an area which exemplifies this need. For literally centuries, much of the material which was available to researchers in this era lay fallow, simply because too few of them were able to access materials written in the

Czech language.<sup>133</sup> Thus old ideas, whether historically accurate or not, were reiterated over and over, and the period and its denizens were shadowed by a distinctly focused representation. It has only been with the spread of Czech writings to the English-speaking world, and with the growth of the number of English-speaking researchers who have gained familiarity with the Czech language that fresh light has been cast on the period.

Another lesson with which this research presents the reader is to be aware, as much as is possible, of the background and personality of the writer of the source material being examined. This is done for many reasons, but it should be borne in mind that it is just as often done so that the researcher might know directions in which the writer is *not* biased, as to know directions in which he or she *is* biased. For this reason, if for no other, it is vitally important to know, whenever possible, the nature of the source behind the source.

One trap which this research points out into which it is far too easy to fall is that of too readily seizing only or primarily that material which agrees with the point which the researcher is attempting to make. With regard to many subjects, a diverse amount of material exists, much of which either already supports, or could be readily manipulated to support virtually any intellectual or ideological stance. While this might be an acceptable practice for the creation of a religious, political, or motivational speech, for serious historical research, it is a simply unacceptable, though too often practiced, method.

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<sup>133</sup> It must be noted that this researcher was, in the preparation of this text, plagued by this very problem.

On a somewhat more personal level, another lesson which this research presents is the reminder to never be fearful to question, even if that occasionally means questioning the reliability of revered, even venerable sources. The American frontiersman and Congresscritter Daniel Boone is credited with having said "Always make sure you're right-- then go ahead." It is a given that the first part of that particular equation is indeed the rub, but the spirit behind the quotation remains true. Modesty and caution are worthy things and do have a legitimate place in historical research. Timidity on the other hand is not a useful research tool and should not be brought to the intellectual "dig."

Finally, there are those lessons provided by the last area of inquiry undertaken, that into the broad survey texts from which many of the readers of this text may find themselves teaching. Here the lesson is a relatively simple one to recognize, if not always so easy to put into practice: It behooves the teachers of history to know their overall subject well enough to know when the individuals writing the texts which they make their students go out and buy do not know the subject. It also behooves the teachers of history not to reward the production of poor texts. This becomes an increasingly difficult problem in a world in which well-written texts have been replaced by ones with large print, few words, third-grade vocabulary, and lots of "pretty pictures" and "eye catching info-boxes."<sup>134</sup> It would seem the duty of the teacher of history, regardless, to ensure that as fully as possible, the students get that for which they have paid: the best and most accurate information which can be given them.

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<sup>134</sup> If in so saying this writer is branded a literary Luddite, so be it! *Alea iacta est.*

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